

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK OF HARM ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES – SERVICE USER VOICE

MAY 2025

WHO WE ARE

This is a research project commissioned by **HM Inspectorate of Probation** and conducted by **User Voice**.



HM Inspectorate
of Probation

User Voice is a charity run by people with convictions. User Voices' participation ensures the research is truly Peer Led at every stage.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the consultation was to better understand the experience of adults at risk of harm on probation and whether their needs are met, especially in relation to safeguarding. Furthermore, our objectives were:

- To understand what support adults at risk of harm, have or haven't had on probation.
- To better gauge their understanding of their time on probation.
- To better understand the quality of their relationship with their probation practitioner.
- To understand any specific positive or challenging aspects of their probation experience.

KEY FINDINGS

- Overall, **65%** of people are happy with the support they have received from probation.
- 4 in 5** people who took part in this research considered themselves vulnerable, although all participants were classed as 'vulnerable adults at risk of harm' by probation.
- 7 in 10** people said their vulnerability was linked to their offence.
- Half** of the interviewed people who had been in prison said their practitioner spoke to them before release, and that they had a release plan.
- 2 in 3** said probation took time to understand their vulnerabilities in induction.
- 3 in 5** found their appointments useful.
- Many asked for more remote appointments due to mental health, physical health, and financial reasons.
- 1 in 5** people do not feel safe when going to probation.
- 3 in 5** people agreed probation have helped them to access all the services they need, and **1 in 2** had received additional support for their vulnerabilities.
- Mental health and housing services were mentioned as lacking the most.
- 4 in 5** have had a good relationship with their practitioner; good relationship is said to be based on listening, understanding, and good advice/support.
- Most people did not feel stigmatised by probation, and **4 in 5** felt listened to.



APPROACH

PRE-FIELDWORK

- Research materials were co-produced with the involvement of a lived experience panel.
- Participant recruitment had two facets:
 - 1) A text message was sent out two times in May to all adults marked as at 'risk of harm' in each probation area. The text message included a link to our survey.
 - 2) Each probation area provided us a list of 17 adults at risk of harm from their caseload to be contacted for an interview.

FIELDWORK

- 26 adults on probation marked as 'at risk of harm' were interviewed for the consultation.
- 242 adults on probation marked 'at risk of harm' filled out our survey.
- Two lived experience peer researchers conducted all the 26 interviews via telephone.

DATA ANALYSIS

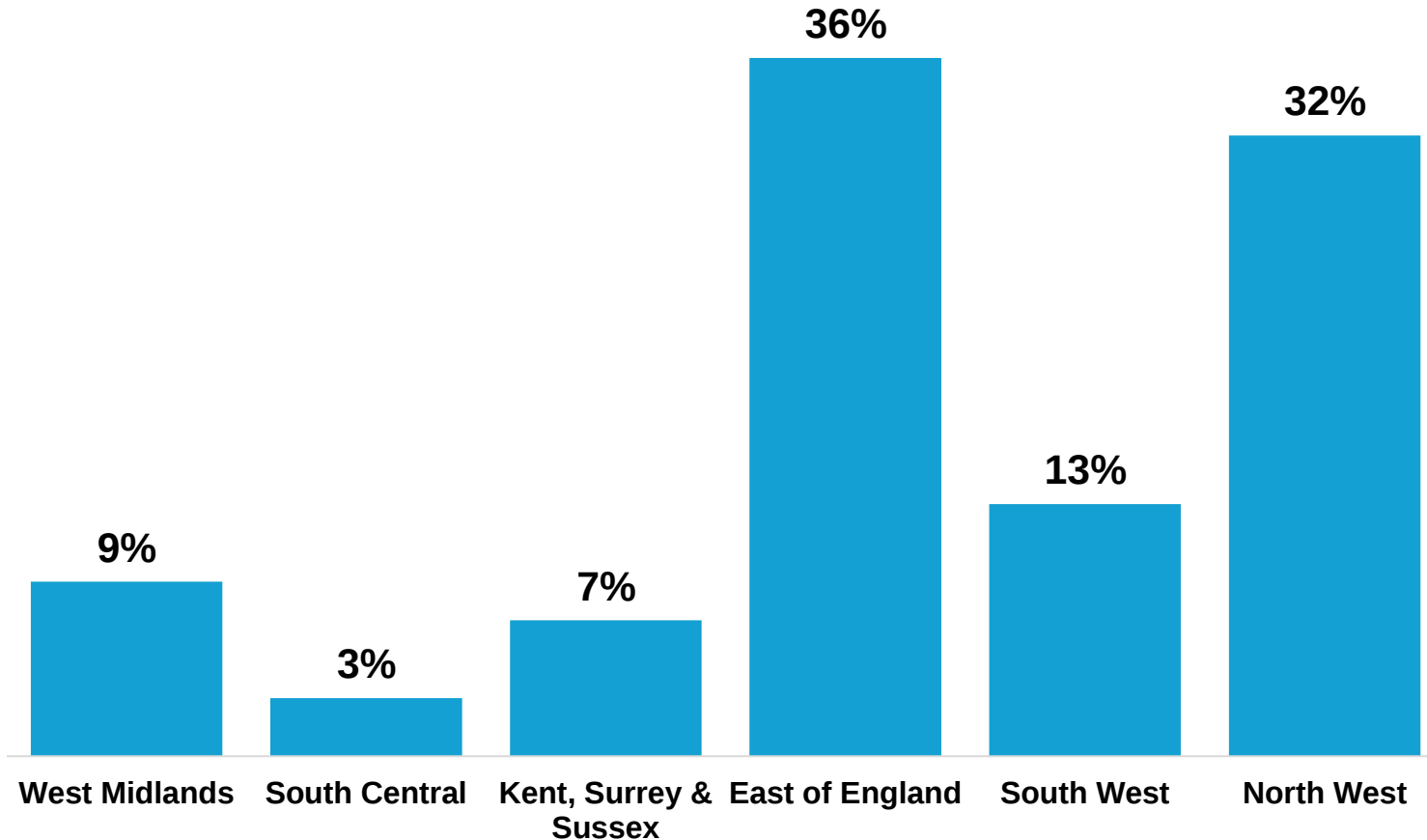
- Thematic data analysis was completed on all qualitative data.
- Statistical analysis was completed on all Likert-scale survey responses.

USER VOICE

RESEARCH SAMPLE

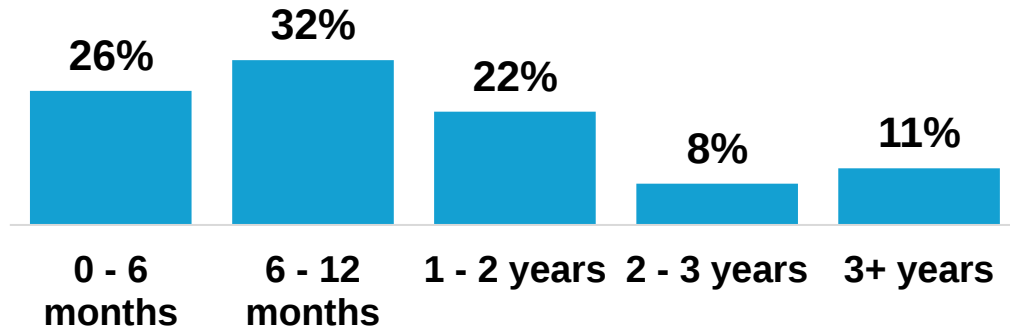
WHO DID WE GIVE A VOICE TO?

PARTICIPANT BREAKDOWN BY REGION

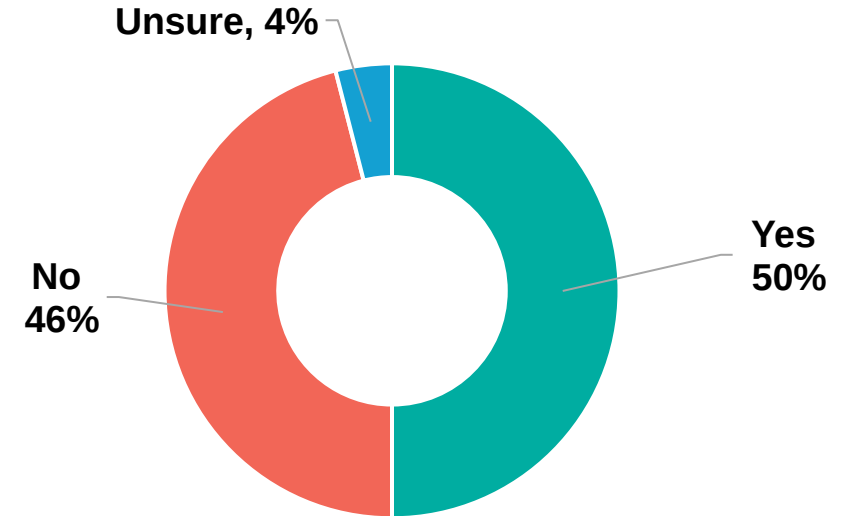


*Some charts may total to over 100% due to rounding.

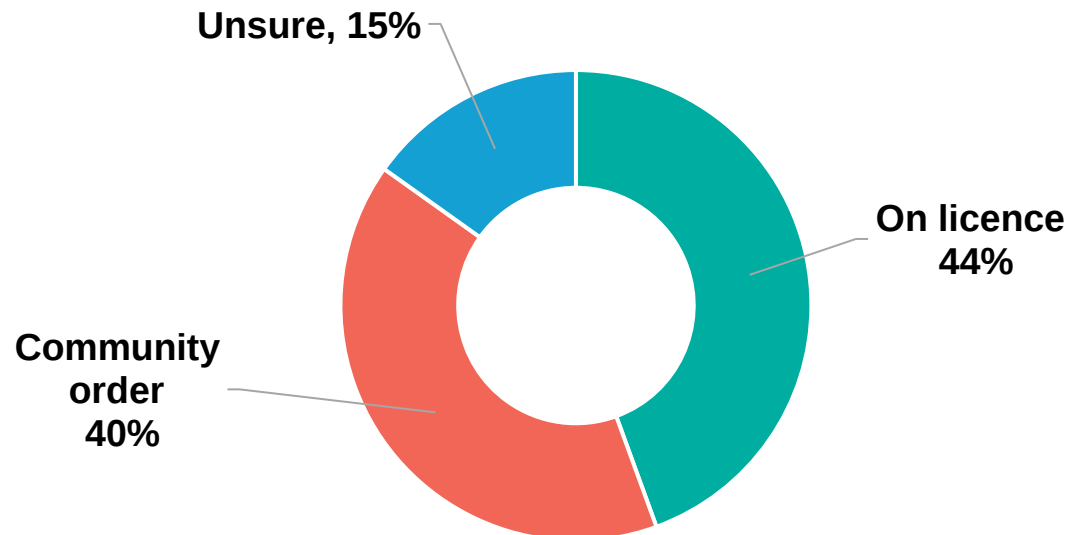
TIME ON PROBATION



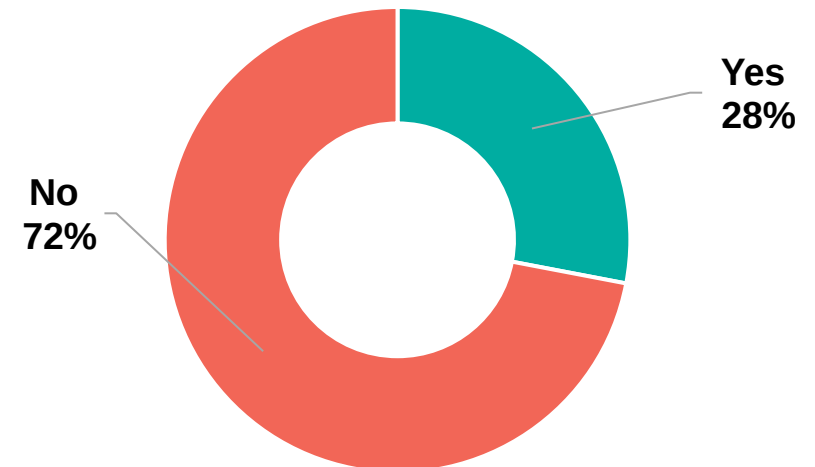
MULTIPLE PROBATION OFFICERS



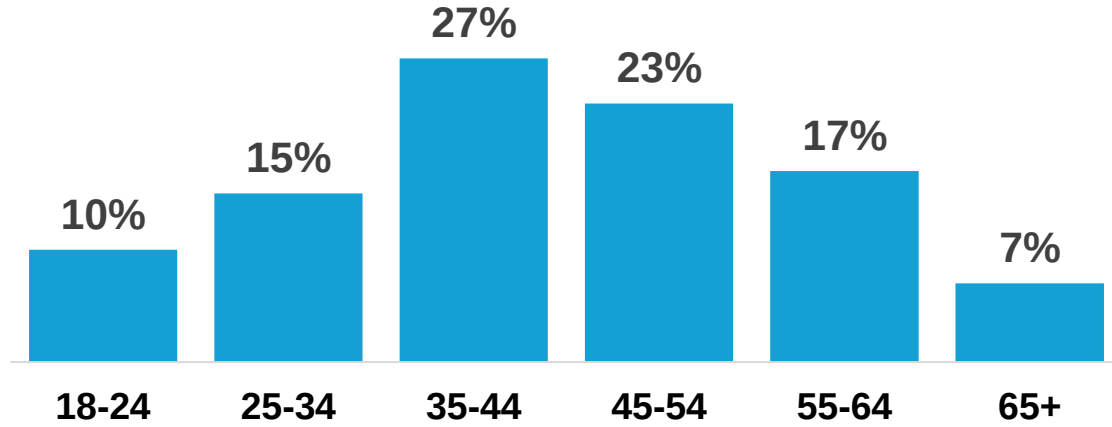
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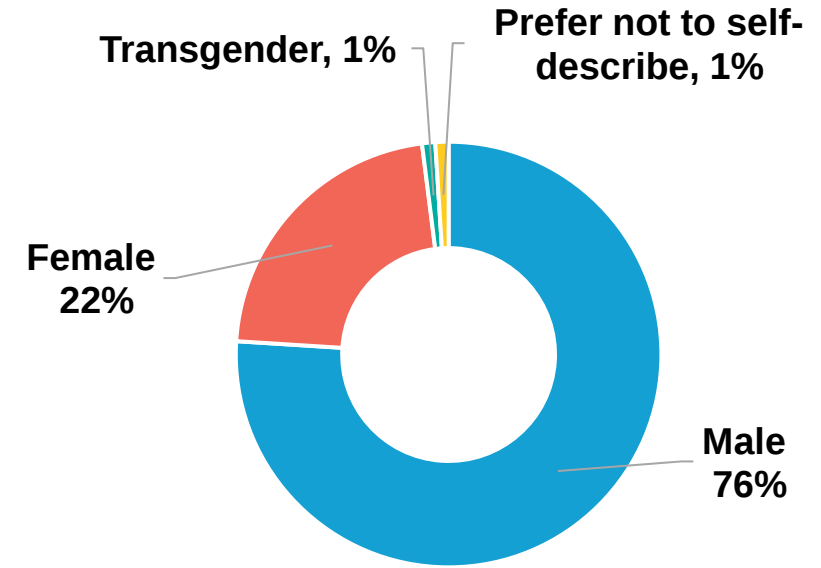
EXPERIENCE OF BREACH



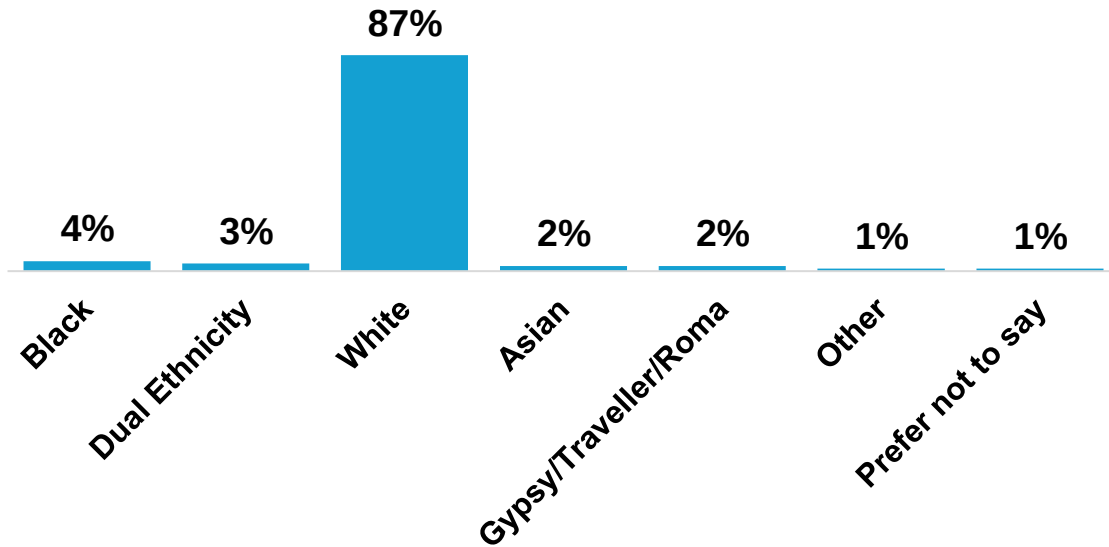
AGE



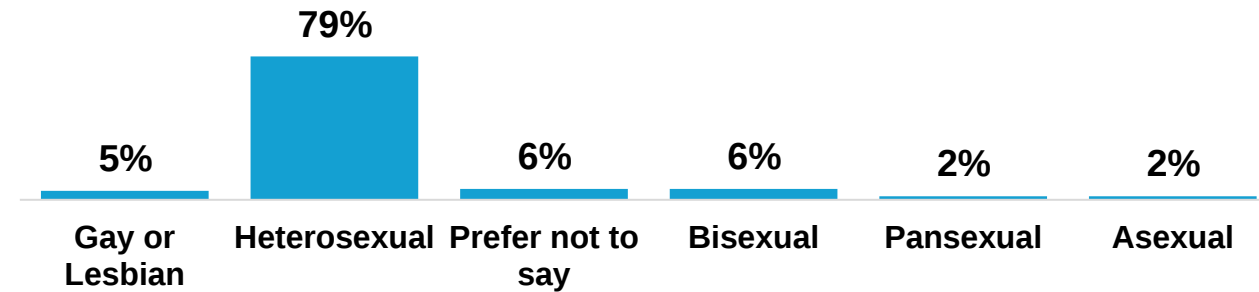
GENDER



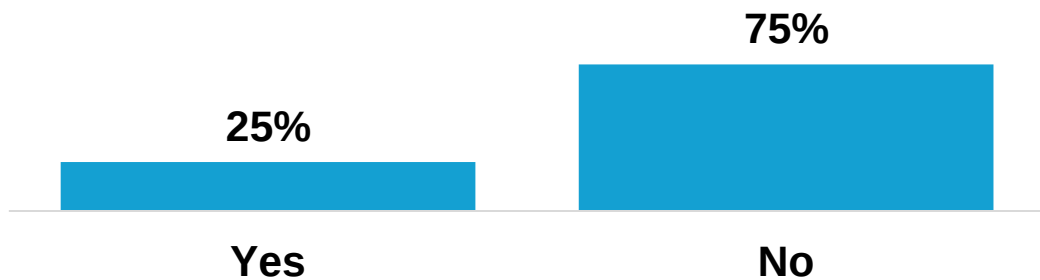
ETHNICITY



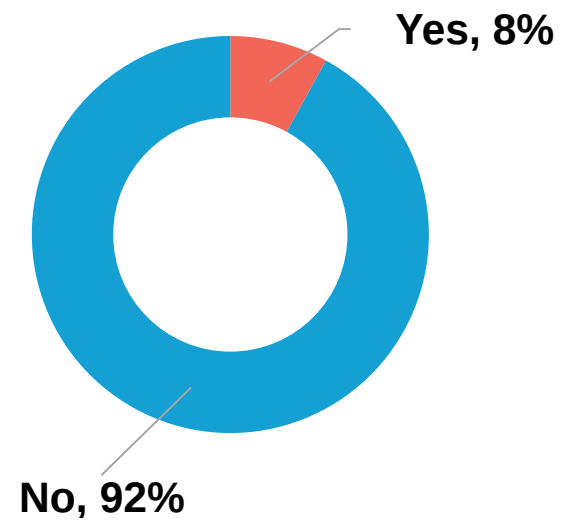
SEXUAL ORIENTATION



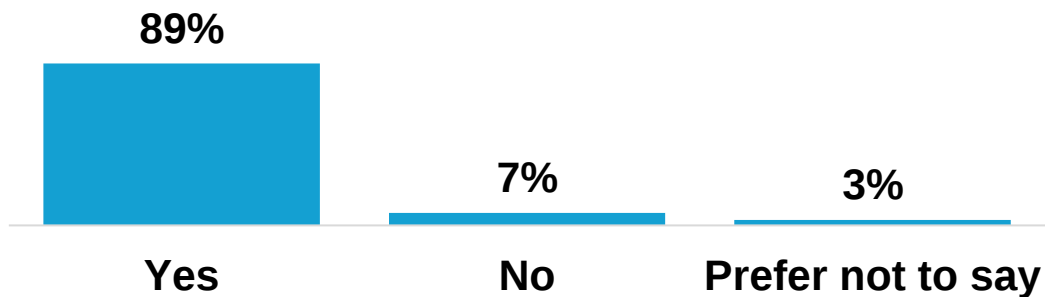
CARE EXPERIENCE



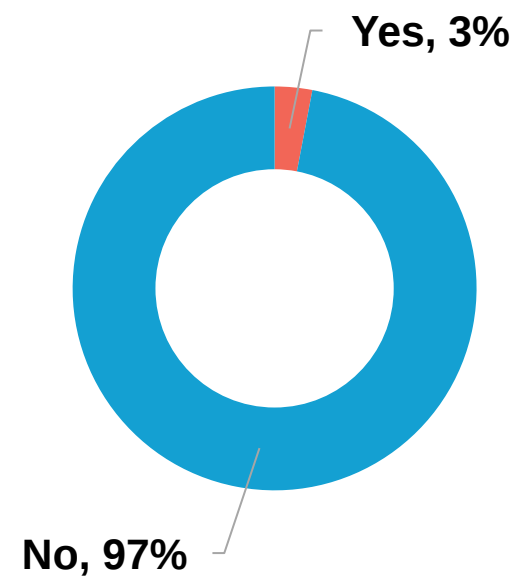
FOREIGN NATIONAL



EXPERIENCED MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

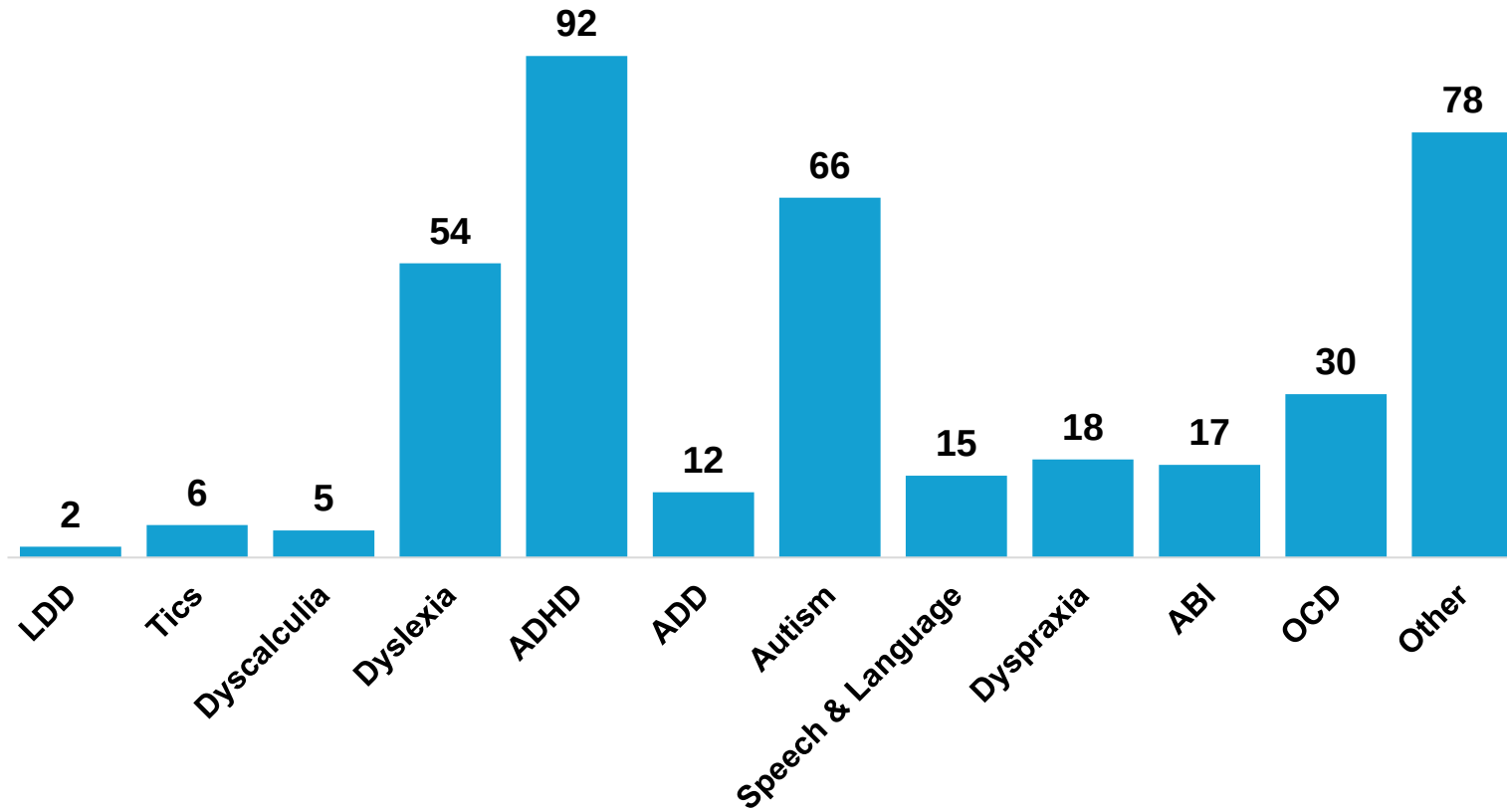


VETERAN

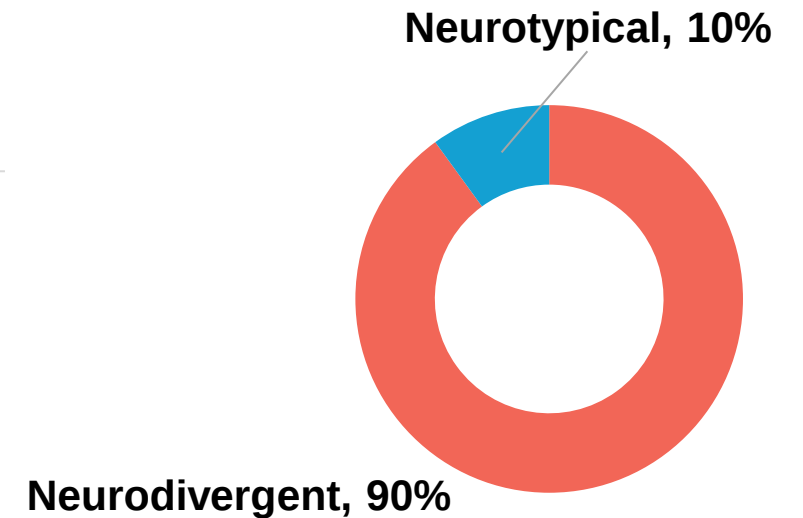
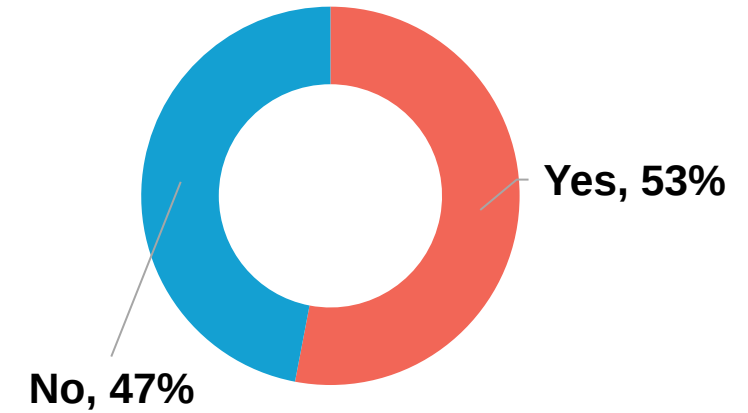


9 IN 10 WERE NEURODIVERGENT

NEURODIVERSE CONDITIONS



IDENTIFIED AS A DISABLED PERSON



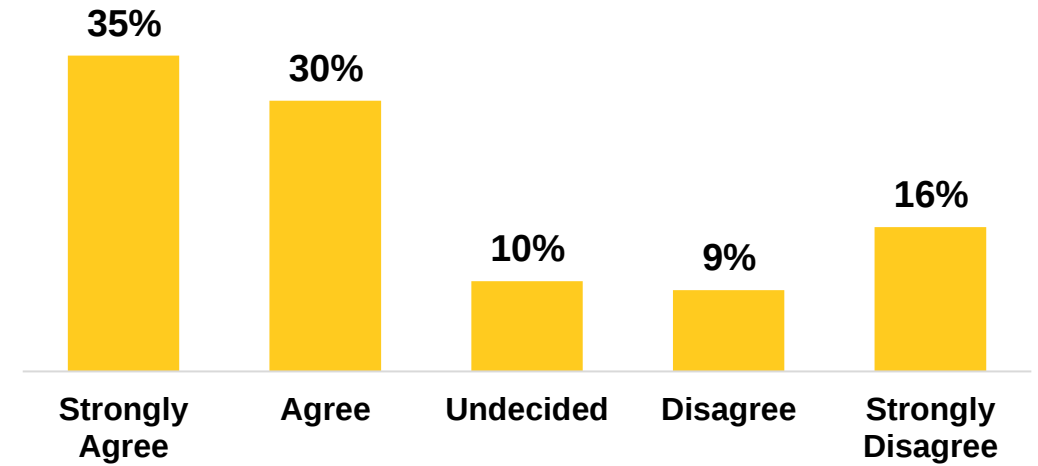


OVERALL EXPERIENCE

1 IN 4 ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE SUPPORT FROM PROBATION

- **65%** are happy with the support they have received from probation, whereas **25%** are not.
- **67%** of women and **65%** of men are happy with the support they have received, whereas **18%** and **27%** are not, respectively.
- Those who were happy with the support mentioned supportive and understanding practitioners, and good signposting to services as the main reasons.
- Whereas those who were not happy mentioned changing practitioners, no consideration for individual needs or circumstances, and lack of access to support services.

Q: 'Overall, I am happy with the support I receive from probation'.



"My time on probation has changed my life completely for the better I especially feel that [Name] made an outstanding positive influence in my rehabilitation I will be eternally grateful for her support and the rest of the team at probation who have gone above and beyond to help me."

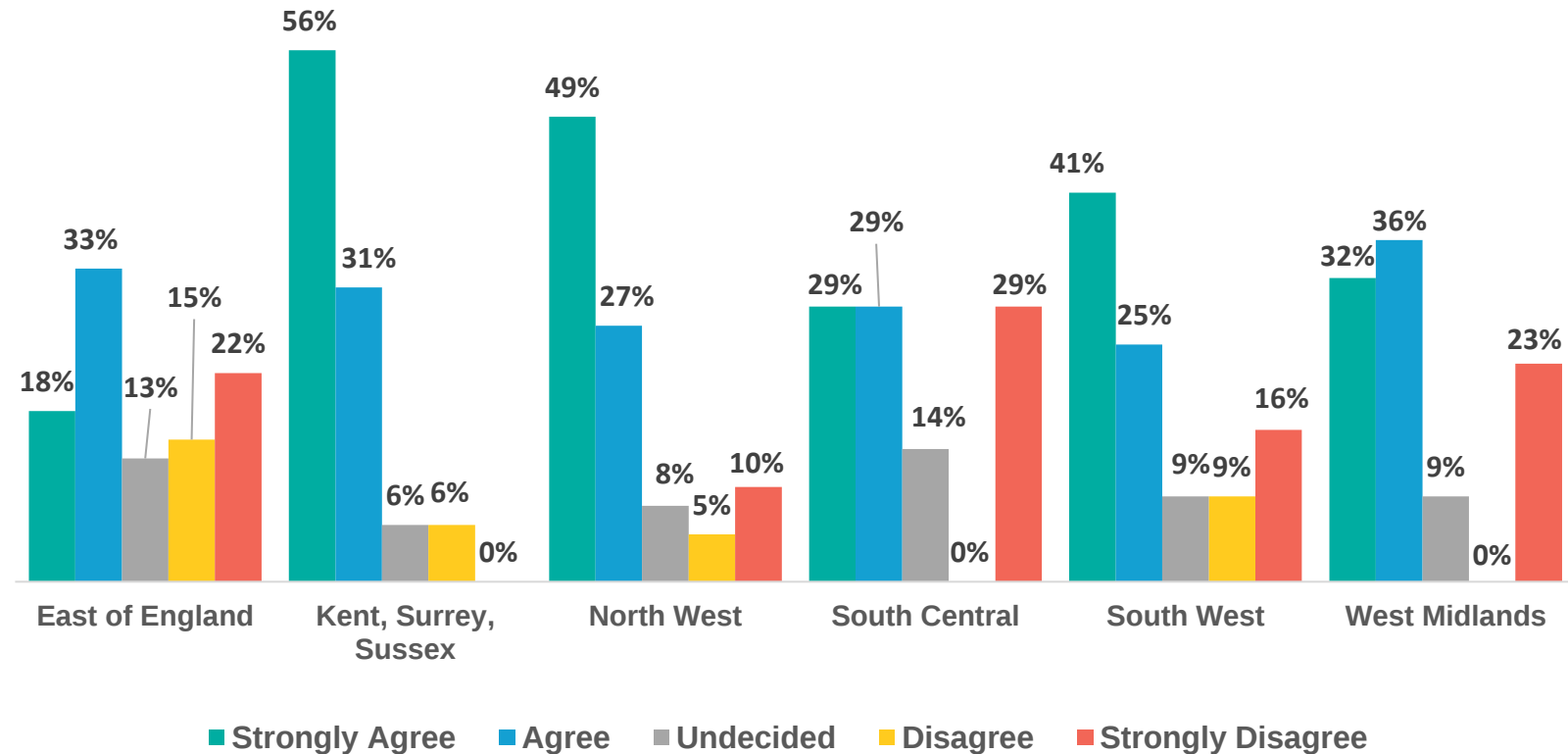
"Yes, I have had help with housing, mental health, put on different courses such as substance misuse, I am happy and had no issues with probation this time."

"Probation doesn't help me in anyway shape or form. They haven't given me any guidance or help with my vulnerability. They wouldn't even house me. I have had to do and have done everything on my own without any help with probation. I feel that probation just holds me back and keeps me in the same dark loop of my life."

87% OF PEOPLE IN KENT, SURREY, SUSSEX AND 76% IN NORTH WEST REPORTED THEY ARE HAPPY WITH THE SUPPORT FROM PROBATION, MUCH HIGHER THAN THE AVERAGE OF 65%

37% OF PEOPLE IN EAST OF ENGLAND REPORT THEY ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE SUPPORT FROM PROBATION, MUCH HIGHER THAN THE AVERAGE OF 25%

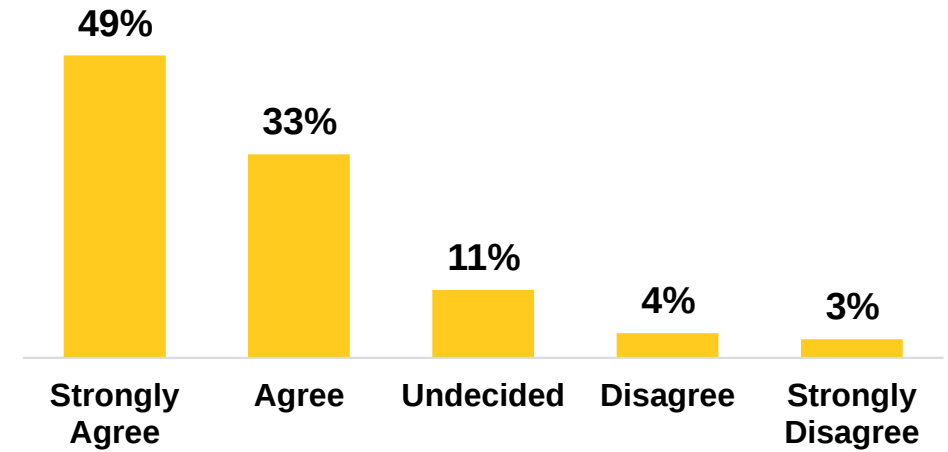
Q: 'Overall, I am happy with the support I receive from probation'.



OVER 4 IN 5 PEOPLE UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY HAVE TO DO ON PROBATION

- 81% of the surveyed and 85% of the interviewed people understand what they have to do on probation.
- Those who said they understand what they have to do on probation talked about obeying their licence rules which were explained clearly, attending appointments, and behaving well.
- Many mentioned the fear of being breached if they do not follow the rules.

Q: 'I understand what I have to do on probation'.



"Yes, I understand, I knew but everything was explained, and I know of the risks of not seeing them or being in contact."

"I know I need to go on a certain date and time; I know how to behave in the office and it's that way."

"They make that quite clear - that's one thing they do make clear - your licence rules."

"Yes, I know about when to go the office and what happens if I don't attend, I will get breached and go back to prison. There is a lot of rules."

- The **1 in 5** people who said they do not completely understand what they are expected to do on probation mentioned lack of communication, conflicting information, and receiving too much information in induction and therefore feeling overwhelmed.

"To be fair not really, I just try and be a good citizen and go to the weekly appointments on time."

"I'm on probation for 12 months. They weren't entirely clear. I sort of knew what was expected of me, but they were terrible at cancelling things at the last minute. I saw many different probation officers. I had to keep calling and checking myself that the appointments would happen."

"It was a bit confusing because they are throwing everything at you. She did go through everything at the beginning, but it was a bit confusing. I wasn't sure if I needed to have different appointment, like seeing my key worker and groups. I was just worried that I wasn't complying with my order."

"It is my first ever time on probation and it is the worst service I've come across; I feel trapped and kept in the dark with appointments and the communication with my officer and the service. I feel like doing a prison sentence but even then, you come out to probation which is a 15 minute appointment in the office and covers nothing. [...] I am not communicated with and my memory is bad so I can't remember appointments and they stopped texting me them, which makes the threat of breach even more stressful making me scared of a stress related fit when I am outside."



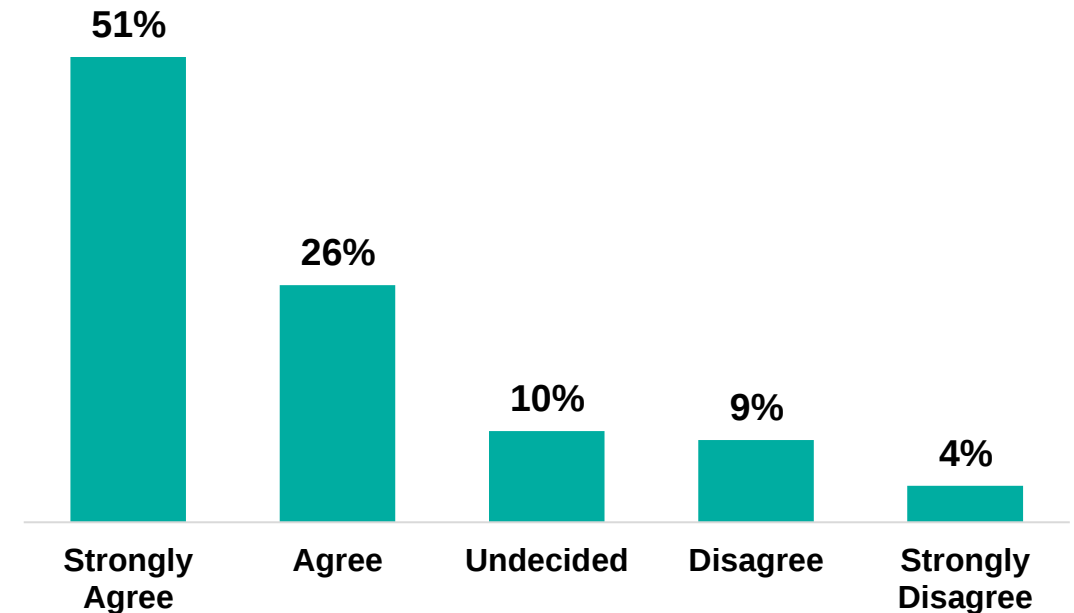
VULNERABILITY

MORE THAN 4 IN 5 CONSIDER THEMSELVES VULNERABLE

76% of surveyed people and **69%** of interviewed people consider themselves vulnerable. People who consider themselves vulnerable are often:

- People who identify themselves as disabled
- Neurodivergent
- Suffering from PTSD
- People with experiences of domestic abuse
- People with drug and/or alcohol misuse issues.

Q: 'I consider myself a vulnerable individual'.



MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY DISABLED PEOPLE

- **53%** of survey respondents reported being disabled.
- When asked how they consider themselves vulnerable, Disabled people mentioned that they can be easily taken advantaged of, their social anxieties, difficulties travelling, and suicidal ideation.
- A few individuals said they are also vulnerable due to being transgender.

"Yes, I am vulnerable since January 2000 I have had the brain of a 7 year old kid. My probation worker is slowly beginning to realise that I am more vulnerable. I have been beaten up twice and in the past people have taken advantage of me and stole my things."

"Oh yeah, definitely. I have anxiety and depression, and I've got a condition called Borderline Personality Disorder and there's traumas in my past. ... that when I go out into society and things, I can get triggered."

"Yes, I have a lot of neurological conditions as a side effect of an immune system which was not my fault, I am also a Transgender individual who presents as Female although was male."

"Yes, I do, I have been sleeping in my car since the death of my Mum for 6 months, I have a speech impediment, one leg shorter than the other but I do not let this stop me physically, however I have depression and been suicidal due to my circumstances."

"Depends on the word vulnerable, in terms of my offence no, but in terms of my health then yes. I have physical and mental health conditions, these are type 1 diabetes, sleep apnoea, high blood pressure, I am a large bloke and struggle to walk I am in an old people home and have carers. I also have depression and anxiety and suicidal thoughts related to my crime."

NEURODIVERGENT PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH PTSD

- **90%** of survey respondents reported being neurodivergent, with **38%** having ADHD, and **27%** Autism. Most people reported having multiple conditions.
- Most people who said they're vulnerable due to being neurodivergent also reported having mental health issues and/or being physically Disabled.
- Many people talked about suffering from PTSD which is making them even more vulnerable. Some had offended because of their PTSD.

"Well, I do have Autism, so I would say yeah. I am diagnosed also with mental health ... I've got Autism, ADHD, anxiety, depression, psychosis, borderline personality disorder, split personality, emotionally unstable personality disorder. I hear voices and things that are not there."

"Yes, I have got dyspraxia and only in the last couple of years known that I have got it. I have been struggling with it all my life, I have suffered in the past from depression a lot and my dad passed away from a car accident and I took it out on the law at the time."

"Yes, I've got learning difficulties and an Autism diagnosis. It has an impact on my mental health ... I don't know how."

"Yes, multiple physical health issues and various mental health diagnosis. I am a blue badge holder so that says it all concerning my health and vulnerabilities. ... I have Autism and 8 mental health conditions, with a complex PTSD diagnosis as well as bi-polar."

"Yes definitely. I have diagnosed severe PTSD, anxiety and depression and epilepsy meaning I have stress related fits a lot in public which is scary, I have memory problems."

"Yes, I do yes, mental health I have go osteoporosis, anxiety depression, PTSD, arthritis."

PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE

- People with past experiences of domestic abuse and substance misuse contemplated their vulnerability.
- Many felt that they are vulnerable due to current mental and physical health reasons, which have often resulted from their past experiences.

"What's vulnerable? I've had domestic violence and I do have a health issue. Yes, they've impacted my mental health ... it makes me more nervous, and I don't want to be out on the streets."

"I've got multiple sclerosis so that kind of makes me vulnerable. I've been through a domestic violence relationship so that makes me vulnerable, but I think they've mainly done it through my health. Or maybe my past because I was heroin addict for years, but I've been clean ... I haven't been active with any drugs since 2020, so that may be why they think I'm vulnerable."

"Only recently in the last couple of years, I went through a damaging relationship which affected me mentally. It's mental health conditions that make me consider myself vulnerable due to past relationship."

"I have long-term mental health issues (complex PTSD, addiction, depression, anxiety). I've been involved in an ongoing legal case involving historical sexual abuses ..."

"Yes, I am - I agree. It has affected my mental health ... because my body and everything was affected when I was drinking. I didn't feel well after all I have done and I'm sorry for that."

"I do feel vulnerable but that's due to situations I've been in before."

NOT EVERYONE CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS VULNERABLE

- 13% of the surveyed service users 31% of interviewed service users do not consider themselves as vulnerable.
- Those who do not think they are vulnerable were surprised to hear that they have been classified as that.
- Some said they used to be vulnerable due to drinking, drugs or domestic abuse but are not anymore after getting clean, sober or away from the abuse.
- Many said they have mental health issues or are physically Disabled but that does not make them vulnerable.

"No, I do not see myself as vulnerable in any way."

"No, not really. I've got no mental health issues."

"I don't know what they perceive my vulnerability to be. I was charged with benefit fraud to claim childcare costs. When I was doing that, I was influenced by some dodgy people, so I think that's why probation see me as vulnerable."

"Erm... I was, but I'm out of that situation, so not now. Cos I was bad on cocaine and I was drinking and I was in a domestic violence relationship, but I've been clean and sober now for 11 months."

"No ... I've got my anxiety, but that doesn't make me vulnerable, does it? Maybe that's why they put it down ... it might be my mental health."

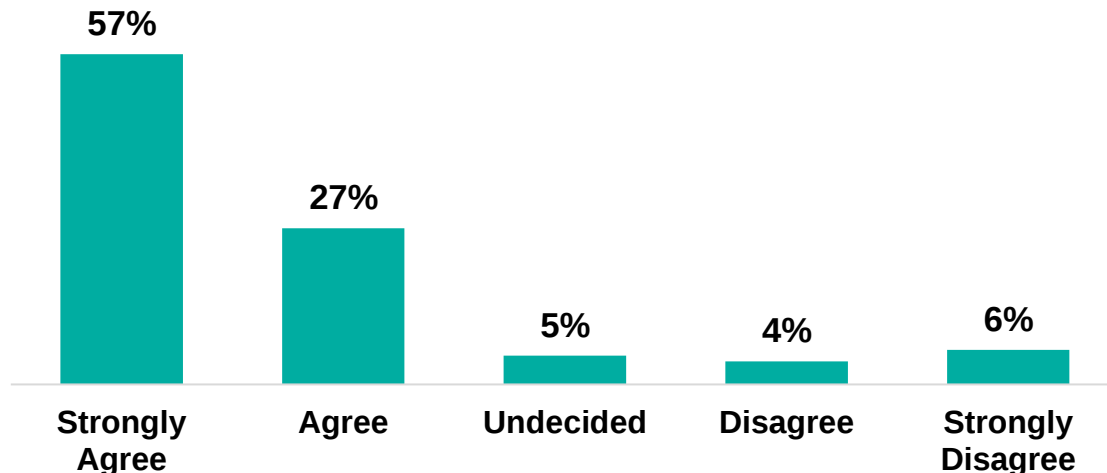
"No, I am not vulnerable. I have a Disabled left arm and leg from a crash and mental health issues, but I am not vulnerable. I do suffer with my mental health depression and lock myself away when needed."

"... now I'm in such a good place, that I wouldn't class myself as one. I was more vulnerable at the time of the offence ... I don't know why they put me down as a vulnerable adult. I did suffer really bad with depression and I was self-harming a bit, yeah."

VULNERABILITY AND MENTAL HEALTH GO HAND IN HAND WITH MOST PEOPLE

- **89%** of survey respondents have suffered with their mental health, and **84%** think their vulnerability has had an impact on their mental health.

Q: 'My perceived vulnerability has had an impact on my mental health'.



"Yes, due to severe mental health issues as well as ADHD, ADD, Autism and more that I have forgotten. It's had a massive impact on my mental health, and it stresses me out."

"With the neurological conditions I have these play a big impact into my mental health also plays a big part in my memory and the trauma I have experienced."

"It's just my mental health now, I wanna get my children back. I did a twelve-step programme ... it was time to change. I didn't want that life and I didn't wanna become a hostel girl or a working girl, so I had to turn my life around."

"It has a big impact on my mental health which has suffered a lot with being on probation for a first offense."

"Yeah, my vulnerabilities have affected my mental health, I've had borderline personality disorder ... they thought I might have bi-polar and ADHD, but when I was going through services, there was nothing available to me because they said they can't diagnose me because I'm active [drug user]."

"It has an impact on my mental health my mood and my anxiety through worrying. I am also an alcoholic."

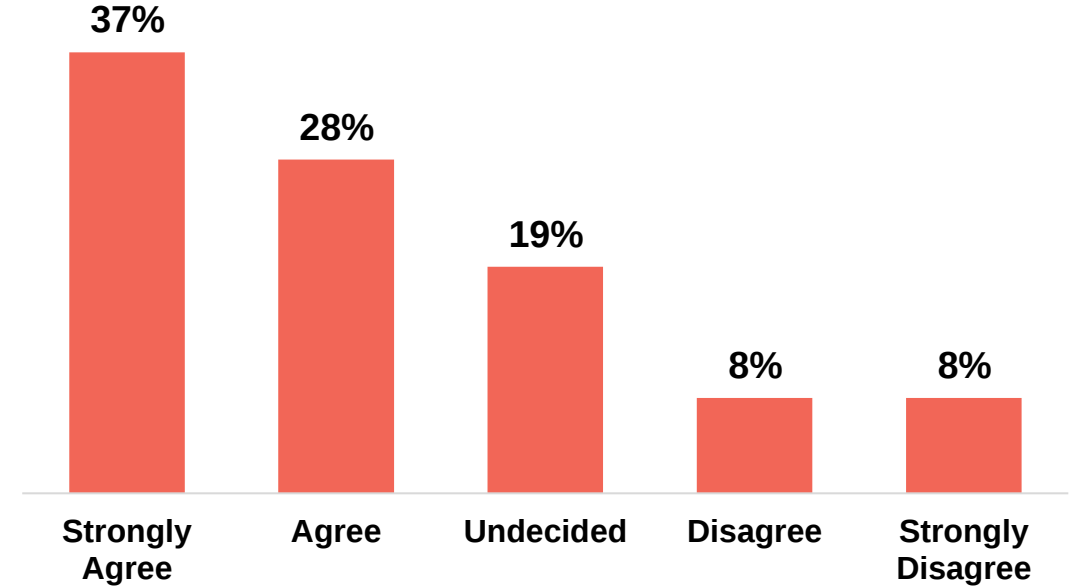


OFFENCE AND VULNERABILITY

7 IN 10 SAY THEIR OFFENSE WAS LINKED TO THEIR VULNERABILITY

- **65%** of the surveyed and **77%** of the interviewed people think their offence was linked to their vulnerability.
- Those people who agreed their offences were linked to their vulnerability talked about domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health episodes, and being taken advantaged of as triggers for their offending.
- Some people who were suffering from PTSD said they offended because of it when they were grabbed by the police or other people and therefore panicked.
- For some people, their vulnerability resulted from being on probation and/or in prison, and some people do not consider themselves vulnerable.

Q: 'The offence for which I was charged was linked to my perceived vulnerability'.



MANY WOMEN OFFENDED DUE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE AND PTSD

"Yeah, he found out where I was and I jumped in the car ... I did things that didn't need to be done. I'm only on a community order."

"Yes definitely, I went to prison for 8 months for arson, endangering lives due to losing it over an ex-partner who was abusive towards me. My mental health had gone and I had become stressed and couldn't manage."

"Yes, I was a victim growing up of sexual abuse, and took this out on police, especially when they grab me and tie me up. This sets off trauma caused by the abuse and if I didn't have PTSD then I may not get aggressive as it sets off an episode."

"Yes, it is linked to my PTSD, what happened is I was followed and grabbed from behind that set off my severe PTSD from childhood and abuse. I hit the person once but can't remember."

"Yes, I had been caring for my mum for the past 18 years I had to ask her to have a bath, if I could go to bed, I had to ask if I could do this and that, I was trapped from the outside world. I got 2-year 8 month in prison."

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL, OR A 'MENTAL HEALTH BREAKDOWN' WERE THE CAUSE OF MANY PEOPLES' OFFENDING

"Yes, I did a lot of drinking when my Dad passed in a car accident and took this out on the law. Drinking and trouble with the law go hand in hand."

"Yes, I was depressed that day, I hit the old bill. Being on a cocktail of prescribed medication while trying to end my life it went a bit crazy."

"Yeah, the crime I committed was 8 years ago and then I got recalled. It was definitely linked to drugs - I wouldn't have done it if I wasn't on drugs. I was desperate, needed drugs."

"Yes, I had some sort of episode where I took a knife to my husband and the police officer. Then they pepper sprayed me and arrested me which was very traumatic and put me in the cells for the whole weekend."

"The last time I went in was for the assault on emergency workers. it was because I was having a complete mental breakdown, and I was also in pain and I felt that they weren't helping me properly."

"Yes, as a vulnerable person and being in contact then with dangerous people who took advantage, I tried to run away. Due to the psychosis, I was experiencing due to taking drugs and alcohol at the time nonstop."

FOR SOME THEIR VULNERABILITY IS THE RESULT OF BEING CHARGED AND SENTENCED

"I was charged with driving offences and was coming towards the end of my order when I got caught driving again and got longer. I do not see myself as vulnerable."

"No, I think it was just a stupid, drunken mistake. The charge sounds a lot worse than it was ... I got remanded and then had to plead guilty to a charge that I didn't really do. It was just a drunken fight."

"No, I had my health problems before the offence, I did not go to prison but my offence has made me really depressed and I thought of killing myself, I have lost all my family, wife children due to my offence. I made a mistake and am trying to get over this."

"No, I did not have any vulnerability when I was charged mine have come afterwards. I spent 25 years in prison."

"No, I got a 6-month suspended sentence and 6 months' probation, I've been a naughty boy in the past. My offence I was sticking up for two local children whose football had been shot by my neighbour. I confronted them and ended up chasing him with a knife."

CASE STUDY 1: 18–25-YEAR-OLD MAN WITH DUAL ETHNICITY

- Mark (pseudonym) is serving a community order; this is his first time on probation.
- He considers himself vulnerable as he is Autistic, has ADHD and identifies as a Disabled person. People have taken advantage of him before.
- Mark understand what is expected of him on probation but feels that weekly appointments at the beginning were too much for his physical and mental health.
- He gets a long well with his practitioner and has had two practitioners in total. They have both listened and understood his needs.
- The most positive thing about his time on probation has been talking to a counsellor in the beginning and getting a lot of things of his chest.
- The biggest issue Mark has with probation is having to constantly verify and prove he is ill when his health gets bad.

“I was depressed that day, I hit the old bill. Being on a cocktail of prescribed medication while trying to end my life it went a bit crazy.

Yes, they were good at the first appointments, I feel safe there and there is no problem with that. We went through different needs, and they took time to listen and understand, I think. Healthwise mental and with CGL this has helped me from then to today.

We have had our differences. I found it difficult to adjust to the changes that were happening.

When they [appointments] were weekly, I would say no. It's too much, I overthink, and my mind will not switch off. I forget about stuff. Phone calls would be easier and better for me now.

I got no support with housing but recovery yes. I would be interested to know what probation offer more as it's my first time on it.”

**RELEASE FROM PRISON
AND INDUCTION TO
PROBATION**

MEETING PRACTITIONER BEFORE RELEASE IS IMPORTANT

- Approximately half of the interviewed people who had been in prison said a probation practitioner did speak to them before release, and that they did have a release plan that considered their vulnerabilities.
- Whereas the other half said a probation practitioner had **not** spoken to them before release, and that they did **not** have a release plan that considered their vulnerabilities.
- Many who had a release plan said they had met with their practitioner in prison via video link and face-to-face. They felt it was important to get to know the person before release.
- Those who did not have release plan said no one met them in prison and that they were released without knowing what to do or where to go. Practitioner had often contacted them long time after they had been released.

"I met with my probation worker by video link and then face to face when I came home I had to see them."

"I met my probation worker via video link so I could put a name to my worker. I left prison and went to an AP. My probation kept in regular contact. When I moved to [City] I was awarded a flat, which I take pride in."

"The probation officer spoke to me in prison. She is a very nice person. Her voice and her kindness, all the staff are so nice. I've had a very good experience with all of them. My release plan did consider my vulnerabilities. I was struggling a little bit, but I'm happy to be free around my family and children."

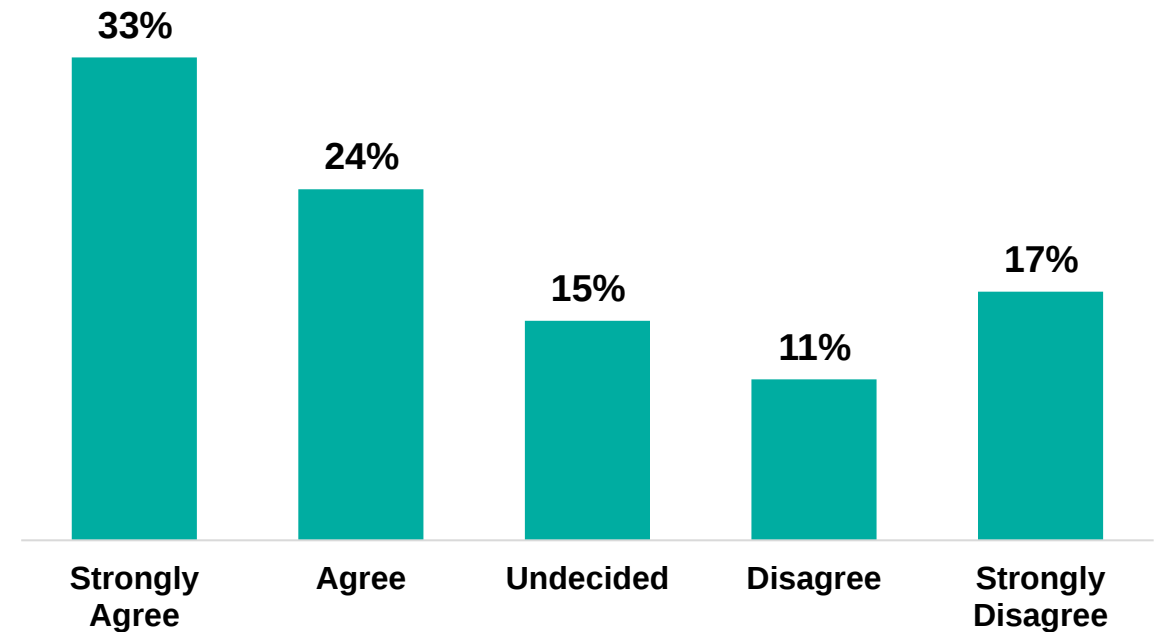
"I didn't see or hear from my probation worker at all until a month after I had been released. No there was no plan."

"They didn't speak to me before release. It was horrendous when I came out of prison, I had nowhere to go, no guidelines. If it wasn't for a family member coming to pick me up, I would have been screwed. I didn't know where the trains were, had no money. The whole thing was a complete shamble when I came out of prison. Absolutely no release plan, it took probation three days before someone actually contacted me and I had to have a tag monitor as well. I didn't get any dates or times or nothing! There was no support at all - none."

ALMOST 1 IN 3 SAY PROBATION DID NOT TAKE TIME TO UNDERSTAND THEIR VULNERABILITIES IN INDUCTION

- 57% of people agreed probation took time to understand their vulnerabilities in induction, whereas 28% disagreed.
- Those who agreed said how their practitioner took a lot of time getting to know them and asking about their needs and vulnerabilities.
- Those who disagreed mentioned practitioner not understanding enough about mental health, practitioner concentrating only on the offence, and the whole induction feeling just as a 'tick box' exercise.

Q: 'Probation took the time to understand my vulnerabilities during an induction'.



IN A GOOD INDUCTION THE PRACTITIONER TOOK TIME TO GET TO KNOW PEOPLE AND SUPPORTED THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND NEURODIVERGENT NEEDS

"Yeah, my probation officer got to know me personally and asked all the right questions, they were all very well trained."

"Yeah, she had a lot of time for me, bless her, she was a lovely lady. There wasn't anything else, they did everything they could to put me on the right path."

"Yes, they asked me lots of questions and asked what they could do to help. In my induction I thought it was perfectly fine."

"The probation officer got in contact with me quite quickly, I had a conversation with her and it was better. They gave me some suggestions about my mental health. They said I may have ADHD and that's something I could look into."

"Yes, they let my support worker [Name] come to the meeting and wrote down everything that I needed, like all the letters to be in pink and not to have a man in the room. I also asked for a bigger room to have the meeting, so I didn't feel trapped in there."

"Yes, I had a good chat when I first went, and we went through different needs and they took time to listen and understand, I think. Healthwise, mental, and with CGL. This has helped me from then to today."

MANY FELT THAT DURING INDUCTION, THEIR PRACTITIONER WAS ONLY INTERESTED ABOUT THEIR OFFENCE OR TREATED THEM LIKE A 'TICK BOX' EXERCISE

"Don't know much about the induction, I saw a gentleman at first and he was just on about the crime and if I would do it again, nothing about me as a person. It would have helped me and getting to know me as a person and the things I have to cope with especially my physical health and mental."

"No, the induction with my first worker was all about the crime and if I would do it again, I lost everything due to the crime. My second worker did do and has really helped. She understands my conditions and about my life."

"No, more concerned with their own work they were not bothered about my mental health or anything like that it was more about meeting my offender manager and stuff like that. It would have helped me more if they knew about me and my life more."

"When I had my induction, if somebody sat and listened for a few more minutes, rather than just ticking boxes. They never gave me any understanding of what was going on, or what was expected of me. ... I felt like I had so much support while I was in custody than when I came out of custody."

"It was like a tick box. They just mentioned it and just moved onto the next one. They didn't go in deep, it was just like 'you're an alcoholic'."

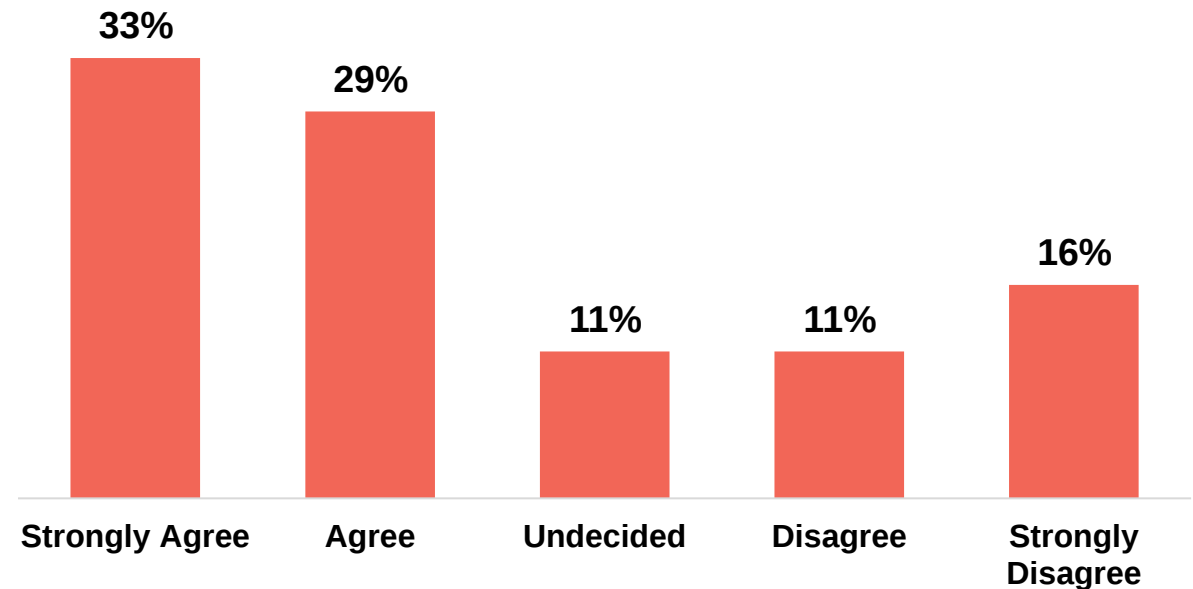


APPOINTMENTS

JUST OVER 3 IN 5 FOUND THEIR APPOINTMENTS USEFUL

- **62%** of the surveyed and **65%** of the interviewed people found their appointments useful.
- Those who said appointments were useful mentioned receiving emotional support from their practitioner or from a peer group, multi-agency support, and having some structure in their life.
- Those who did not find appointments useful talked about how they are too short without any meaningful support or signposting, how they negatively impact work and therefore their rehabilitation, or how for some people appointments are overwhelming due to too much information or inconsistent communication.
- Many expressed how remote appointments would be easier for them due to work and health reasons.

Q: 'I find my appointments useful whilst on probation'.



MULTI-AGENCY SUPPORT, AND REGULARLY TALKING TO PRACTITIONER OR PEER GROUPS ARE BENEFICIAL

“Yes, they give me a structure, I know I have to attend on a Monday once a month and that I need the bus fare and to get up and be there for a certain time, she (probation worker) listens and helps. The ‘Personal wellbeing’ course helps me a lot too.”

“Yeah, absolutely fine. She's in contact with other support groups that I'm involved in, so they're all linked as one. I see Turning Point and the local mental health team, they give her reports as well. Everyone being on the same page helps - then you know there are people out there who care about you.”

“Yes, they are positive, she is working for me and is able to give me a positive outlook when I leave. Before I would have depressive thoughts but seeing her helps with these. She gives me confidence cos it's not very good sometimes.”

“I find that the whole experience has been very helpful, and I always find myself feeling happier and as if a weight has been lifted from my shoulders after I've been to my probation appointment.”

“Yeah, they help me to get better. It's like women's groups, you talk about your happiness and your emotional. We talk about all different topics and then we ask questions around the groups. It helps you to feel better.”

SHORT APPOINTMENTS AND LACK OF COMMUNICATION ARE STRESSFUL FOR MANY

"To be fair no, it stresses me out. All it is basically is turn up then Hello, how are you and Goodbye. No support with issues that affect me like housing."

"Not really, I just show my face and then I'm out. I don't know her, and she doesn't know me. They could have helped my needs by knowing me better and at least reading up on the notes first."

"I feel like probation puts pressure on people making their life's harder and they don't look at what problems can occur when they don't help people out properly all they care about is ticking their boxes not about helping people."

"I feel overwhelmed with appointments my brain gets confused, other appointments too it gets too much sometimes I start crying and get upset."

"I am not communicated with and my memory is bad so I can't remember appointments and they stopped texting me them, which makes the threat of breach even more stressful making me scared of a stress related fit when I am outside."

"The system is geared for unemployed or people in minimum wage age roles. As someone with disability it is hard enough to gain roles at senior level without probation not taking in consideration that you are not available, or you need to be able to fulfil your job role."

CASE STUDY 2: 35–44-YEAR-OLD BLACK MAN

- Ethan (pseudonym) is serving under year long community sentence.
- He considers himself vulnerable due to his severe PTSD, epilepsy and mental health issues.
- Ethan feels probation has not done anything for him.
- His practitioner has not considered or understood all his vulnerabilities or signposted him to services that would have helped him. Instead, they have sent him to groups that have made his PTSD worse.
- Ethan's biggest issue with probation is their lack of communication which have made his physical and mental health worse. At the beginning, Ethan was sent appointment reminders via text message, this was suddenly stopped, and he has missed appointments because of it. He fears getting breached.
- He does not have anything positive to say about probation.

"I have diagnosed severe PTSD, anxiety and depression and epilepsy meaning I have stress related fits a lot in public which is scary, I have memory problems.

Yes, it [offence] is linked to my PTSD, what happened is I was followed and grabbed from behind that set off my severe PTSD.

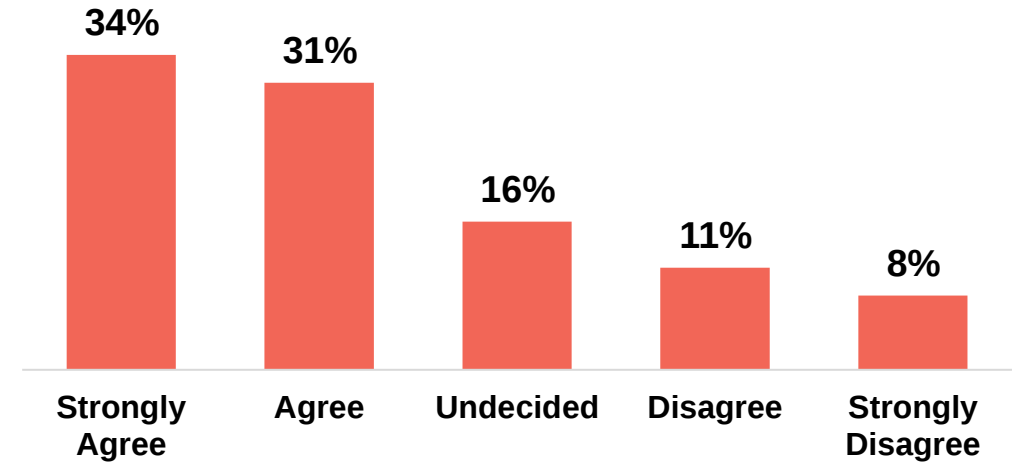
Its a nothing relationship, he [practitioner] went against what we agreed, communication is the issue. My requirements are not and never been met, these are health requirements. Simple text message to remind of my appointments and they stop doing this.

The groups they had included people not vulnerable, and these groups were detrimental to me causing episodes of PTSD, but I still was made to go. I am not communicated with, and my memory is bad so I can't remember appointments and they stopped texting me them, which makes the threat of breach even more stressful making me scared of a stress related fit when I am outside."

4 IN 5 PEOPLE FEEL SAFE WHEN GOING TO PROBATION

- **65%** of the surveyed people agreed they feel safe when going to probation, whereas **19%** disagreed.
- **13%** women and **21%** men said they do not feel safe going to probation.
- Some people with mental health and neurodiverse conditions said they don't feel safe and are afraid they are going to get hurt or hurt someone.
- Some said they do not feel safe because of having to mix with other, possibly dangerous, people at the reception.
- Some people sentenced for sex offences said they are scared other people in the reception area finding out their offence.
- Many wish for more remote appointments, and man/woman only reporting sites or times.

Q: 'I feel safe when I go to probation'.



"I do feel safe when I attend probation and they gave me extra support. I was wobbly when I didn't know it was going to change to a different probation officer. There was one time when I ran out of probation because it was going to be a man."

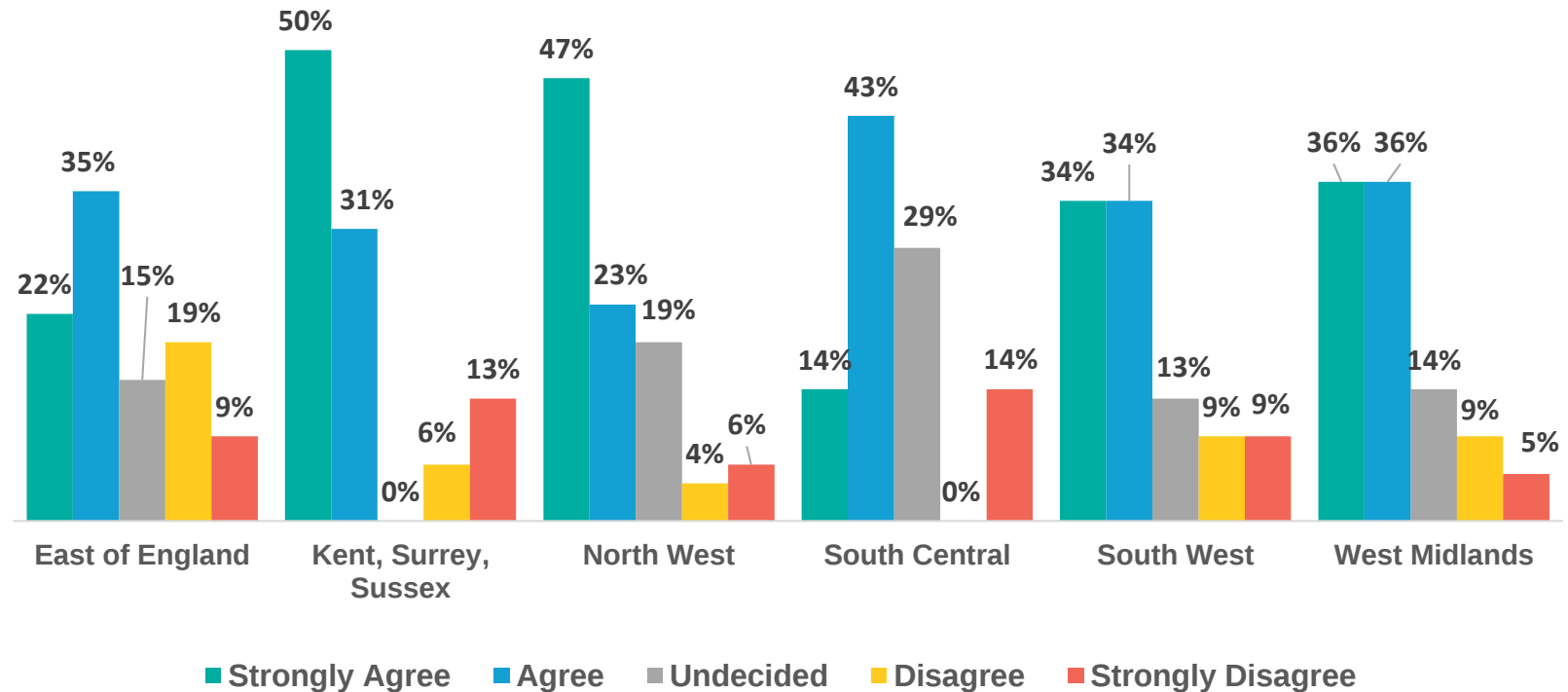
"Yes, they are alright, I do feel safe at the office."

"Yes, I feel safe when going to and when I am in the probation office."

**28% REPORT NOT
FEELING SAFE IN EAST OF
ENGLAND WHEN THEY GO
TO PROBATION, HIGHER
THAN THE AVERAGE OF
19%**

**81% REPORT FEELING
SAFE IN KENT, SURREY
AND SUSSEX, HIGHER
THAN THE AVERAGE OF
65%**

Q: 'I feel safe when I go to probation'.



SOME WOMEN WHO HAVE TO REPORT IN MIXED GENDER OFFICES DO NOT FEEL SAFE GOING TO PROBATION

“Being around men too, because I've been abused by men, physically and sexually. So, when you come into probation and you've got burley men there and they're shouting, you know, it really puts me on edge.”

“I'm not sure if I feel safe going to probation. Don't know where the baby's dad lives, but there's nothing in place, he could easily find out where I'm going cos he knows I'm on probation. There's no safety methods in place for any woman who goes there to be honest and it's not fair because there are women out there who haven't escaped. I've seen women who go out of probation and there are men out there waiting for them.”

“I don't feel safe going into the probation office, I hate going in there, t's all men in there. It's uncomfortable. I literally go in two minutes before my appointment. This is definitely linked to my vulnerabilities, I do suffer from anxiety and that doesn't help.”

“I don't feel safe in probation in the Reception area, there are too many people coming and going, who I wouldn't normally socialise with. It would be nice if there was a man's probation and a woman's probation - the same building, but with different entrances and exits. This is definitely linked to my vulnerabilities.”

SOME DO NOT FEEL SAFE IN PROBATION DUE TO THEIR MENTAL HEALTH, NEURODIVERSITY OR THEIR TYPE OF OFFENCE

"Phone calls would be better for me as social situations and strangers freak me out."

"It kind of feels safe to go to probation. [Practitioner] has told me that no-one will hurt me cos everyone's in the same situation, but because of my mental health and voices and stuff I still feel anxious and worried they're gonna hurt me or I'm gonna hurt them."

"Autism means I can be temperamental and there was one instance in a group a guy said he had beaten his pregnant Mrs and I flipped and struck out, they should be mindful of who comes into contact with who at any office and meeting place."

"Telephone calls or Zoom calls to make sure you're not in the wrong environment would help. Walking into probation offices are the problem I think and mixing with certain individuals."

"... when you're in recovery probation obviously has a lot of high-risk users. Therefore, you are put in a vulnerable situation as there's always other people that are using so it's a difficult place to attend."

"The waiting room is absolutely terrifying for me, especially due to my conviction, I know that if anyone recognised me or somehow found out what it was, my life would likely be in danger."

CASE STUDY 3: 25–34-YEAR-OLD WOMAN WITH DUAL ETHNICITY

- Alice (pseudonym) is on a licence after spending 7 months in prison.
- She would not classify herself as vulnerable because she is currently in a good place in her life, but she understands why probation might think so because she was depressed and self-harming when she came out of prison. She is Dyslexic.
- Alice's induction was not good because someone was covering for her actual practitioner. Alice was petrified and did not know what to expect, and the person lacked compassion and was patronising.
- Her practitioner is the most positive thing about probation. She took time to know her and to understand her circumstances and family dynamics.
- Alice's biggest issue with probation is that she feels that she is in limbo with another year to go on her licence but nothing else to do. She is hoping to get re-sentenced.

"My offence was something to do with a child and I wasn't in a very good place when it happened, so that's probably where that came from.

I had a good release plan, but they gave me 40 RAR days, which is fine, but I'm a year away from the end of the sentence now and we've nearly done them all. The mental health order lasted not long, I didn't even get the full 10 sessions, there wasn't a lot there.

I'm now down to one appointment a month. I've done all my Springboard work, so I don't feel like I'm doing anything in those appointments. I'm literally going in for about 10-15mins and then I just go.

I don't feel safe going into the probation office, I hate going in there, it's all men in there. It's uncomfortable. I just think oh my god, I don't like this. I literally go in two minutes before my appointment.

I would have liked them to change little things, like changing the day that I went into probation, you know, like a women's only day."

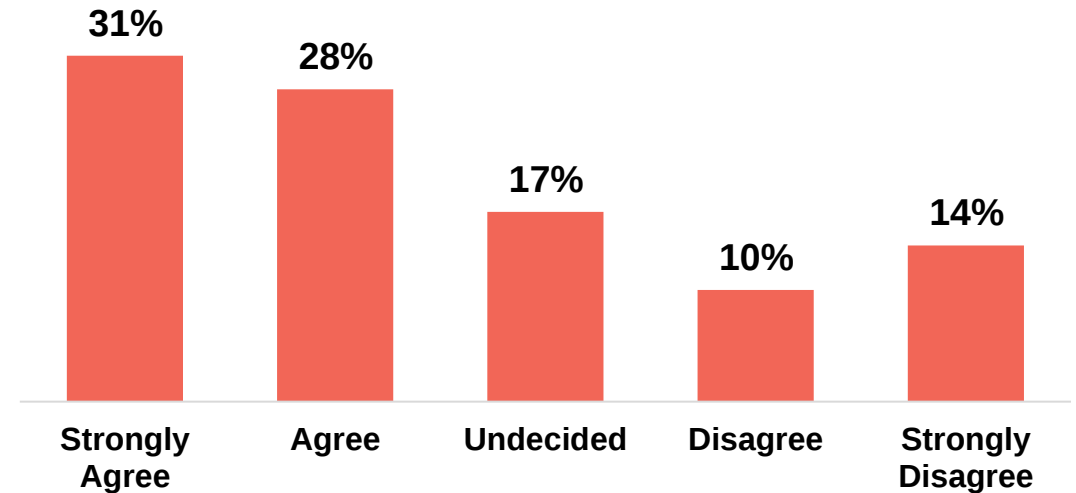


SERVICES

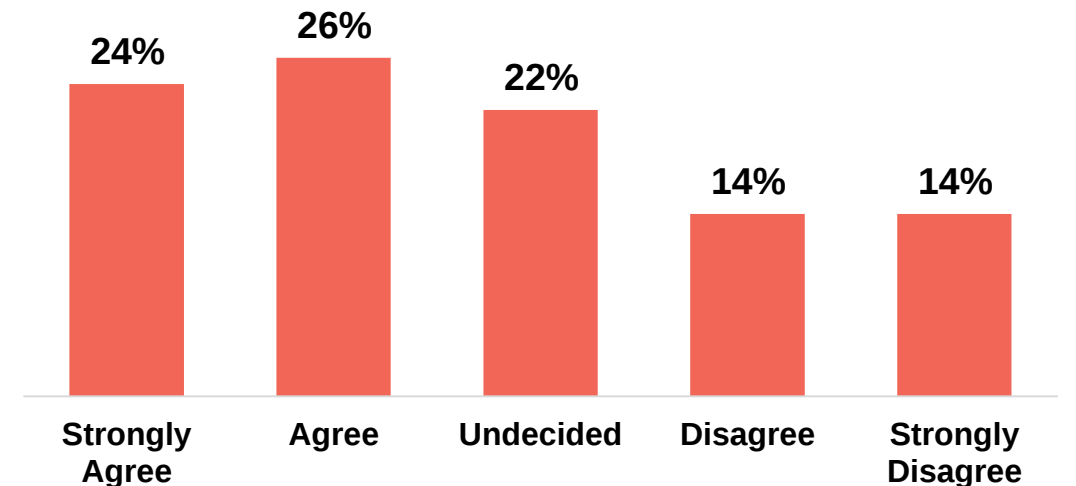
1 IN 4 HAD NOT RECEIVED ALL THE SUPPORT THEY NEEDED

- **59%** of the surveyed people agreed probation have helped them to access all the services they need, whereas **24%** disagreed.
- **26%** of men and **17%** of women disagreed probation have helped them to access all the needed services (58% and 61% agreed, respectively).
- **50%** of the surveyed people agreed they had received additional support for their vulnerabilities, whereas **28%** disagreed.
- Most people talked about lack of support services for housing and mental health.
- Few people mentioned not having received support for their substance misuse.

Q: 'Probation have helped me access all the services I need'.

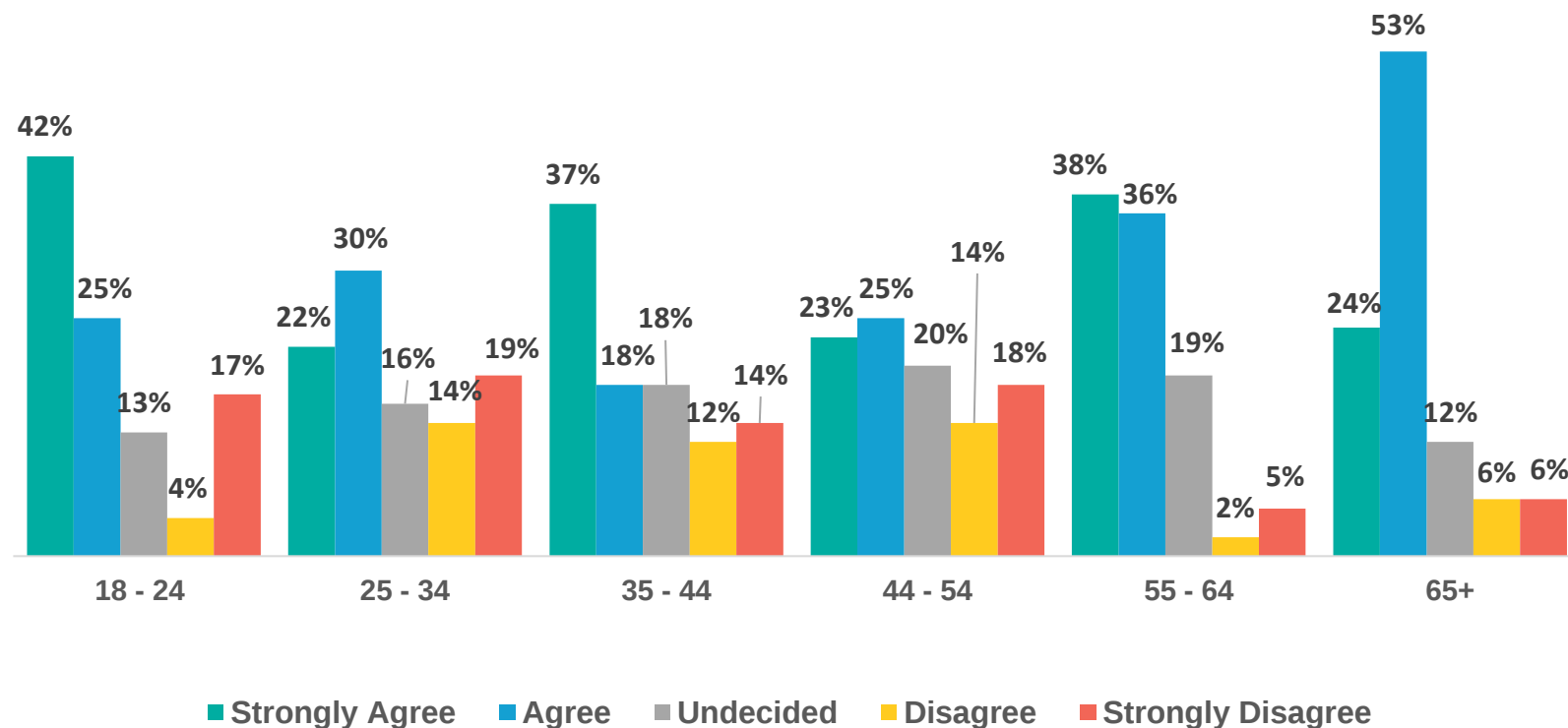


Q: 'I have been given additional support for my perceived vulnerabilities'.



**77% OF OVER 65 YEAR
OLDS AND 74% OF 55-
64 YEAR OLDS SAID
PROBATION HAS
HELPED THEM TO
ACCESS ALL THE
SERVICES THEY NEED,
HIGHER THAN THE
AVERAGE OF 59%**

Q: 'Probation have helped me access all the services I need'.



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING SERVICES WERE THE MOST MENTIONED SUPPORT SERVICE RECEIVED, FOLLOWED BY HOUSING AND DEBT SUPPORT

"Yes, lots of questions and how they could help me. I have NACRO one-to-one a week and have had 16 months of therapy for mental health and to let it all out and to talk."

"Yeah, they helped me get the social worker and I'm working with Whitechapel. that's like housing and things like that. I get a lot of support - lots of numbers ringing my phone. All the services have been useful."

"Yeah, they put me in contact with adult social care and I was able to have a bathing assessment that needed doing."

"NACRO, therapy for mental health was arranged through probation which helped."

"Yes, I was put in touch with citizens advice and with MIND and another mental health service, these have helped with my debts and my mental health. I am happy with the help they have given me."

"They helped me with housing. They were good, they phoned places for me. I'm under Chatsworth House, the mental health thing."

HOWEVER, MENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING WERE ALSO THE MOST COMMON AREAS PEOPLE HAD NOT RECEIVED SUPPORT FOR

"They do something for your mental health - it's just give you meds and see your doctor, nothing else. They don't give you no numbers. Like if you're feeling shit late at night, not even a list of services what you can contact, mental health, alcohol, drugs, whatever you need."

"No access to any services from probation despite my diagnosed conditions. I need help with mental health and physical health, above this is the threat of breach and possible prison which sets my conditions off more."

"No not really, I have been asking for help with housing since the start and they just tell me to go to the council who then do nothing, probation should be helping me, they don't support with my mental health and, if anything, work against me by forcing me to do things I can't."

"I've had no help from probation whatsoever no help to find a home a roof over my head just left. I left prison homeless no help whatsoever no help finding a job nothing no help with my mental health no support at all. I thought probation was there to help well they failed me and many people I no."

"No help, left me homeless on both releases and was too quick to recall people back to prison."

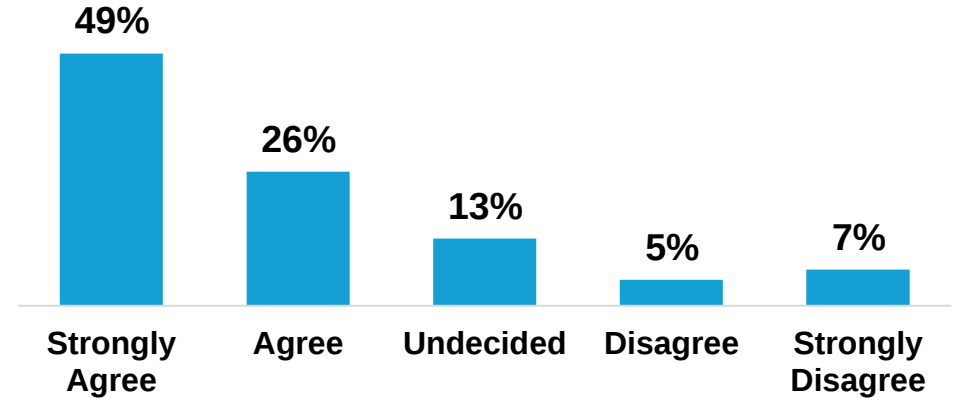


RELATIONSHIP WITH PRACTITIONER

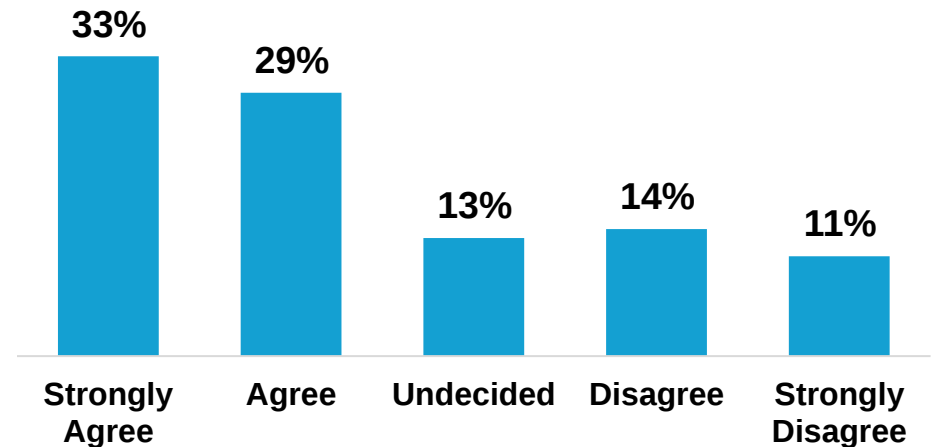
4 IN 5 HAVE A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR PRACTITIONER

- **75%** of the surveyed and **85%** of the interviewed service users agreed they have a good relationship with their probation practitioner, whereas **12%** and **15%** disagreed, respectively.
- **62%** of the surveyed people agreed they feel comfortable talking about their vulnerabilities with their practitioner, whereas **25%** disagreed.

Q: 'I have a good relationship with my probation officer'.



Q: 'I feel comfortable talking about my vulnerabilities'.



A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WAS BASED ON LISTENING, UNDERSTANDING, GOOD ADVICE AND SUPPORT

- Most people with a good relationship with their practitioner talked about the following: they take time to get to know circumstances and background, they listen, they do everything they can to help, they have trust, and they give good advice.
- Some people also mentioned their practitioners are honest, do not judge, and do not put too much pressure on them.
- Some people with Autism mentioned their practitioner considers their condition and keeps appointments on the same day every month or week.
- Few people said that since their practitioner has lived experience of 'having been in trouble' or growing up in the same class background, they are able to better understand and support.

"She's really understanding and kind in heart, I cannot describe how much this lady has helped me. I'm so happy that I've been blessed with a good person in charge of my case. I don't easily open up to people, but her kind personality allowed me to be myself and be vulnerable."

"[Name] is a lovely person, and she always understands. They try to find me things to do because I'm always on my own. They help me go into groups and things like that. She said I need the help and I'm willing to take the help - does that make sense? I feel comfortable talking to her."

"Yes, I do she is really helpful and listens and helps, she has given me numbers like citizens advice and MIND for mental health. We talk over and she gives good advice and sends emails to my social worker and to MIND."

"This is the first time in my life to be put on probation (I am 64yrs old). She was a very good listener, every time I went to see her, she greeted me by name asked how I was doing and remembered everything I told her. I was very impressed! She offered me all the help and assistance I felt I needed, and I actually miss our meetings now!"

"My probation worker has been good to be fair, I think they have been in trouble themselves in the past and we get on well, they have helped me, and we have talked, and they have listened and done as much as they can."

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING, TRUST, COMMUNICATION AND COMPASSION RUINS THE RELATIONSHIP

- People talked about how their practitioners have a lack of understanding and even lack of interest in their circumstances or vulnerabilities, which often leads to people getting breached.
- Lack of trust from their practitioner results in people not wanting to talk about their vulnerabilities.
- Mental health issues, learning disabilities, health issues, sensory issues, bereavement, and caring for Disabled children, were mentioned as circumstances that their practitioners had either ignored or not been interested in.
- People also mentioned lack of compassion from their practitioners, and some told us there are practitioners who abuse their position of power to intimidate vulnerable people on probation.

"She didn't want to understand my background - by what she said and how she acted. I didn't even feel comfortable looking at her, let alone talking to her. How can you be that young and be so horrible and bitter and twisted? If you're in that line of work, you should be compassionate - she just wants to recall people."

"Absolutely the worst experience of my life if I'm totally honest. But [Name] has no idea how to talk to or treat vulnerable adults like myself on probation. In fact, I was attacked kidnapped my home caught fire I was made homeless, and I swear not once did she even take time to ask or ring to see if I needed help, apart from breach me ASAP last year, but I kept going to appointments she talked to me like I was something she stepped on."

"My probation officer never understood and never considered my circumstances she kept breaching me. I'd end up back in court with the risk of imprisonment which would send my mental health skyrocketing. I'm a carer for three mentally ill sons. I'm very forgetful due to stress, my probation officer never listens."

"After my father passed away, my mental health was the lowest it had ever been and I told that to my probation officer and he didn't give me any time to grieve and heal so that made me feel like I had to go on the run to clear my head, which made me breach my suspended sentence and ended up back in prison again which I feel was an injustice."

OVER HALF HAVE HAD MULTIPLE PRACTITIONERS

- 50% of the surveyed and 65% of the interviewed people have had multiple probation practitioners.
- The interviewed people who had not had a good handover when changing practitioners often had more than two practitioners, whereas those who told us their handover was good usually had only had two different practitioners.
- A good handover included new practitioner thoroughly learning the case history from the current practitioner, and/or shadowing their last appointments.
- Those who said they did not have a handover talked about feeling confused and frustrated having to repeat everything to a new practitioner.
- Some people with Autism mentioned that since they do not cope well with change, changing practitioners without a good handover was negatively impacting their rehabilitation.

"I had two in 12 months. She told the new one all the history about me."

"Yes 2, when it was coming to the end of my first probation workers time, the second probation worker used to come into the appointments until the first one left which helped."

"Yes - five. There was no decent handover, my head was all over the place and I didn't know who I was seeing, or which one it was."

"I saw a total of five different officers - and the person who did the home visit, I had never seen before. There were no proper handovers, and it was all over the place - no organisation."

"Yes two, I do not think that starting your order, getting to know and trust a person and then having to change halfway through to someone, considering I have Autism and do not like or cope with change well is good for the rehabilitation of people. This is my issue with probation."

"Over the time I was with probation, I had five different probation officers and one of them was a man and I said I don't want a man, because I don't get on with men and I walked out on that one."

CASE STUDY 4: 25–34-YEAR-OLD IRISH TRAVELLER WOMAN

- Margaret (pseudonym) is serving under one year community sentence.
- She does not know if she is vulnerable but says she has experienced domestic abuse and has struggled with her mental health. She also has LDD and dyslexia.
- Margaret's induction was good, they were friendly, asked her all the questions, and told her everything she needed to do.
- Getting help with her housing has been the most positive thing about probation.
- Margaret has not had any issues with probation; she would like to thank all the staff for all their help and to give them her appreciation.

"What's vulnerable? I've had domestic violence, and I do have a health issue. Yes, they've impacted my mental health, it makes me more nervous, and I don't want to be out on the streets.

I'm running from the family ... I left my ex-partner cos he thinks I'm going with every man, people were following me. He found out where I was and I jumped in the car ... I did things that didn't need to be done.

[Practitioner] is a lovely person, and she always understands. They try to find me things to do because I'm always on my own. They help me go into groups and things like that. They got me through to the council and women's Turnaround. She said I need the help and I'm willing to take the help. I feel comfortable talking to her.

Yeah, they help me to get better. It's like women's groups, you talk about your happiness and your emotions. It helps you to feel better. ... I get a lot of support - lots of numbers ringing my phone. All the services have been useful."

CASE STUDY 5: 35–44-YEAR-OLD WHITE MAN

- James (pseudonym) is serving under one year community sentence.
- He considers himself vulnerable as a Disabled (chest related illness) man who has mental health issues. He also has ADHD and is an alcoholic.
- James said his induction was not great and that they were mainly interested about his offence.
- He was originally given a bus pass to travel to his appointments which helped him a lot.
- His biggest worry is being able to afford to travel to his appointments, he has asked for another bus pass but has not been given one. He is worried he is going to be breached if he misses any appointments.
- Most positive thing about probation is his practitioner whom James would like to nominate for a medal.

“My mental health was bad at the time, and I was arguing with my girlfriend, I had been drinking a lot, and the police came about 12 of them for me, put me in handcuffs and pressed me down on my chest so I kicked out.

I feel safe in the office but it’s like ‘The Bronx’ people drinking bottles of vodka, I do feel stigmatised people look at me up and down and I find it very uncomfortable. I feel safe when I am in the office with just the probation worker, it’s the waiting room that makes me feel a bit wary.

CGL for my drinking is crap, they also put me in a bail hostel which described by the probation officer as ‘not up to standard’. I do a ‘personal wellbeing’ course through probation though which is really good and helpful, discussing anger management and to stop and think and not react.

The way my worker helps she understands and listens she is a mother figure to me and deserves a medal, I find the female workers better.”

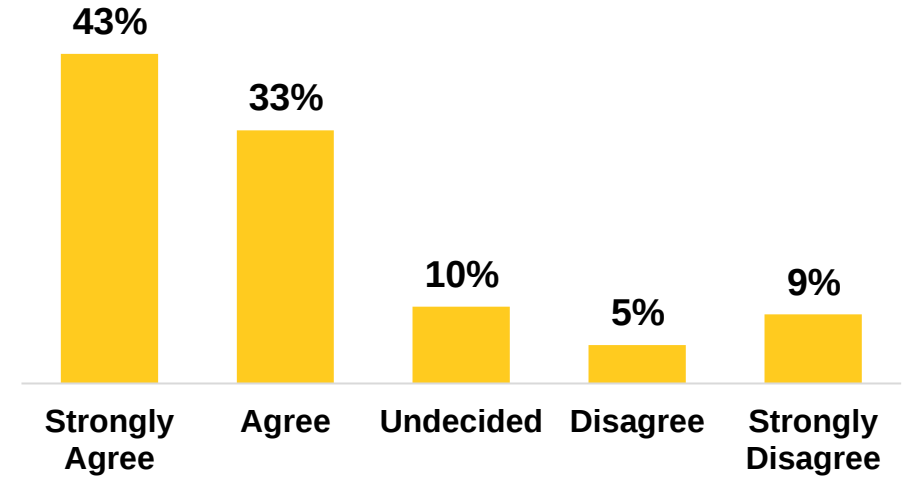
USER VOICE

VOICE

MOST PEOPLE DO NOT FEEL STIGMATISED BY PROBATION

- **76%** of the surveyed people agreed probation treats them with dignity and respect, whereas **14%** disagreed.
- Only few interviewed people said they felt stigmatised by probation for their vulnerabilities, most due their substance misuse issues.
- Only couple of interviewed people felt stigmatised by other people on probation.

Q: 'Probation treat me with dignity and respect'.



"I do not feel stigma, defiantly not. I feel listened too and safe in the office."

"Yes, they do, I do not feel stigmatised, and they treat me fairly and with respect yeah."

"Yes, they do I feel I am treated right and with respect, it's my health but I do not feel stigmatised by probation."

"I was treated like a normal person for once."

FEELING STIGMATISED BY PROBATION

"I did feel stigmatised by my vulnerability. They were patronising as I was still with my partner, and they contacted social services. I know they need to be careful and stuff, as people are being coerced and stuff. It was frustrating for me, as I knew it was fine. I told them they were wasting their time on me when there were people who needed support. I didn't feel stigmatised by other people on probation."

"You get stigmatised as an ex-user and a criminal anyway. I don't feel stigmatised by other people on probation, we're all in the same boat."

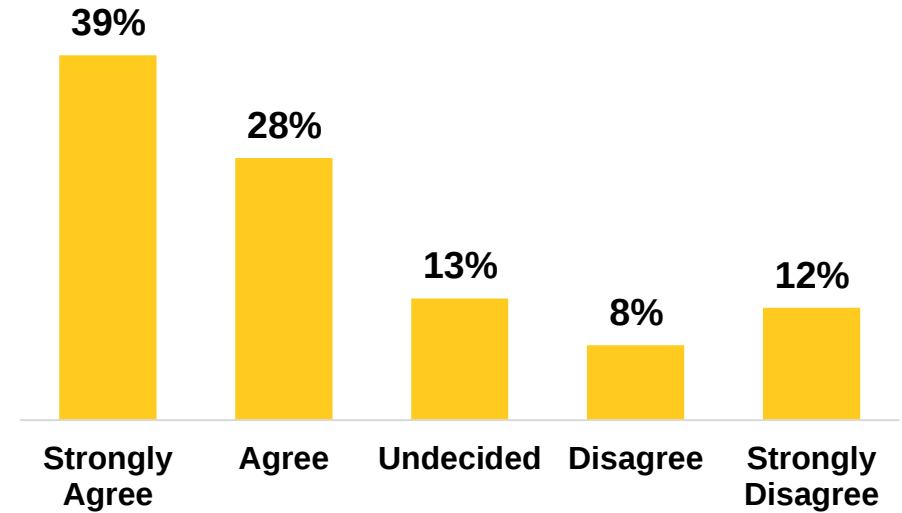
"I have felt stigmatised, like you're a naughty girl and this was because of my drug and alcohol misuse. Being stigmatised makes you feel shitty in yourself, don't you? Bloody hell, it makes you feel like you've made one mistake in your life. I'd never been in trouble before all this and then you get stigmatised for it, it's just not right. I've not felt stigmatised by other people on probation."

"There is one lady on Reception who is very rude. I have an emotional support well-being dog and she knows she's allowed in there, but she says "that dog's not allowed in here!" She just gives me a horrible attitude and shouts across the office, there's no need for it. It makes me feel, uncomfortable, awkward and like I'm the size of an ant."

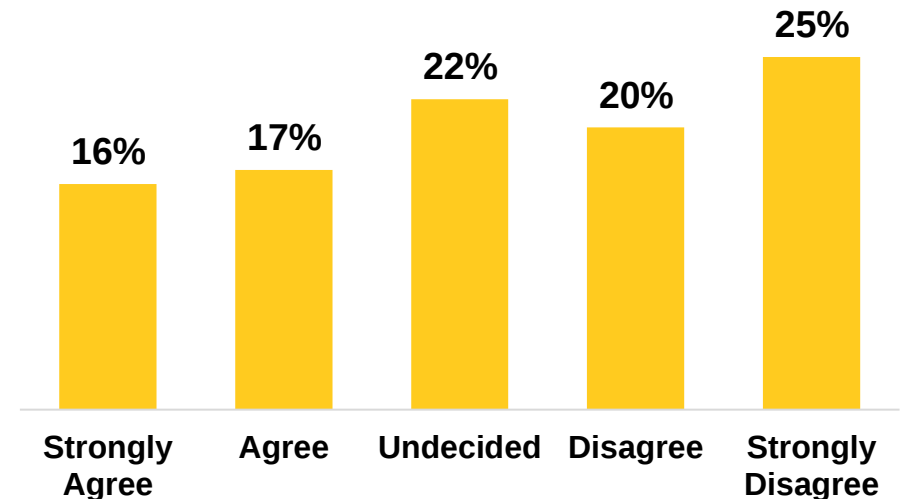
ALMOST 4 IN 5 FEEL THEY ARE LISTENED TO BY PROBATION

- 67% of the surveyed and 81% of the interviewed people felt listened to by probation, whereas 20% and 19% disagreed, respectively.
- 33% of the surveyed people agreed they have a say how probation is run, whereas 45% disagreed.

Q: 'I feel listened to by probation'.



Q: 'I feel like I have a say how probation is run'.



CONSIDERATION OF INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND GOOD COMMUNICATION MAKES PEOPLE FEEL THEY ARE LISTENED TO

- Those who felt they are listened to by probation talked about good communication, good handovers, and consideration of individual needs.
- Some felt their practitioners take their opinions and suggestions into consideration, whereas others said they do not have any say how probation is run.

"Yes, I feel listened too and safe in the probation office, they understand and want to know about me. I cannot fault them in this way, they have also said everything they would do and done it for me."

"Yes, they listened to me and have helped by coming to my home due to my illness. I have a say in how probation have and do help me based on my individual case and illnesses. I was apprehensive at first, but they have worked to help me."

"Yeah, she does listen to everything, and she helped me to get my dog back. She knew everything about that, and all the information and they did a good handover of my information."

"Yes, I feel listened too, sometimes it's just turning up and chatting which has helped with the worker I've had. I don't get to have a say in the probation running and next month is my last one."

"The whole team at probation need a pat on the back. I've found myself and my voice back."

"I think so, I mean I've never tried to make a suggestion. I'd like to think that if I said something, my probation worker would at least take it forward and get it acknowledged."

SOME PEOPLE FEEL THEIR VULNERABILITIES ARE NOT LISTENED TO OR CONSIDERED

- Those who felt they are not listened to by probation said that their disability, mental health, and neurodiversity needs are not being considered regarding appointment times and places, and regarding unpaid work placements.
- Some also mentioned that probation does not clearly communicate or inform them about their conditions, or any changes to them.

"No, I feel I have been targeted if anything, all of probation know nothing at all about mental health and it's a massive problem. They do not understand my emotions. I was targeted by others on unpaid work because of my vulnerability yet probation would not listen and forced me to continue and then breached me for not going."

"I have breached due to a mistake with my phone and am going to court soon, but this is too far, and I can hardly walk due to my size and health, I have written a letter and hope the court area can be changed."

"Not really, they do not take into account my mental health and physical health and memory loss. They do not help and is the worst service I have ever come across. I just feel trapped and in the dark with probation."

"No agreed plans, change without being told. I have no choice and feel trapped in a service that is not clear or consistent and does not help."

"I feel in some ways they are not and weren't discussed beforehand to come up with conditions that I would like to have seen on there as much as probation may have wanted as well."



POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP WITH PRACTITIONER IS THE MOST POSITIVE ASPECT OF PROBATION

- When asked what has been the most positive aspect of their probation experience, most people talked about their practitioners who they can rely on for understanding and support. For many people, their practitioner is the only person they regularly meet, talk to, and share their feelings with.
- Other positives people mentioned were therapy and/or counselling which is helping them to regulate their feelings, peer support groups, access to services, multi-agency support, and unpaid work which for some gives needed structure to life.

"It is a safe space to speak about things. I wouldn't hesitate in messaging her or calling her about something."

"The staff, they are all polite and they try to help. My probation worker listens and as I have no family, I find talking to her really helps."

"The way my worker helps she understands and listens she is a mother figure to me and deserves a medal, I find the female workers better."

"[Name], she sees me from when I was down to what I become. Also, meeting the women upstairs who do Women's Turnaround, the women's group."

"For me it was how they worked together with CGL and how it fell into place, I was looked after, and things were organised."

"For me it's improving my own communication, I have learnt to bite my tongue and try and stop myself getting to boiling point with my emotions that are linked to my mental health and sensory problems."

"It really was the therapy and having one to one talking every week was massively helpful, unpaid work I enjoyed. I felt I needed to be punished, and the unpaid work was relaxing and gave me structure too."



CHALLENGES

DUE TO THEIR VULNERABILITIES, TRAVEL TO APPOINTMENTS IS CHALLENGING FOR MANY

- When asked what is the biggest issue they have faced while on probation, difficulties to travel to appointments due mental health, physical challenges or financial reasons were the most common responses.
- Other often mentioned challenges were a lack of consideration of individual vulnerabilities and circumstances, and a lack of clear and consistent communication.
- Also changing of practitioners, not feeling safe at probation offices, no support for housing, a lack of lived experience staff, and a lack of continuity of care after probation finishes were mentioned as challenging.

"I find the distance to probation hard to get to with my health and mental health as they are an hour away from me with can sometimes be hard with my agoraphobia some days I can't go outside."

"Transport for me is a big issue with only a few busses in the village I live. The new worker expects me to travel more which doesn't help and financially this is forty pounds each way."

"I find it hard to travel the distance I need to go to get to the probation office which ends up as a 7-hour total travelling time for a 20 to 30 min chat with the officer. I am in a low paid job and taking £18 out of my wage is a lot for bus fares. ... I am not a good traveller and find it very overwhelming at the best of times. This is having a detrimental effect on my mental health, but no-one seems to be hearing what I'm saying about it."

"This insistence [of in-person appointments] is extremely stressful for someone with my mental health issues who is on limited capability and PIP and never leaves the house, they have zero care for mental conditions."

"It's the travel, I live 12 miles away and although they gave me a three-month bus pass its run out and they moan about giving me another so the cost and having the money to get to the appointments, but I know if I do not go then I will probably go to prison and that weighs on my mind."

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST ISSUE YOU HAVE FACED WHILE ON PROBATION?

"I do not think that starting your order, getting to know and trust a person and then having to change halfway through to someone, considering I have Autism and do not like or cope with change well is good for the rehabilitation of people. This is my issue with probation."

"The only thing was not getting the check-in appointments after a while, I felt I had made progress then things were taken out of the blue and without the check ins it's been hard to get more help."

"Communication from probation. They do not respond when they say they are going to do and then don't know how to work with, talk or support people with mental health and sensory problems."

"Communication via text with my appointments. This was agreed and stopped and then I was breached I am due in court at the end of the month and fearing prison."

"Literally it was only the waiting rooms, walking in there some people are vulnerable and they do not have boundaries. Your nice to them cos you do not want to get hurt. That was the only thing some of us cannot stick up for ourselves."

Getting sick and my health is very un-predictable, having to verify this when its bad [is my biggest issue]."

"With me having Autism I feel the probation service is a challenging experience. The thing I find most challenging about it is saying what I need to say within the time frame, because I know there is only either a 45-minute appointment or 1 hour appointment time available."

"Probably in the beginning, when I didn't know what was expected of me."

"I have Autism and ADHD and I sometimes feel as I can mask quite well that I'm perceived as being ok and able to cope, which is far from the truth. I find even the littlest tasks very overwhelming. Also, I suffer from agoraphobia and find it very hard to leave the house, for example, my last appointment I had to travel 45 mins each way on 2 busses, walk 15 mins each way to the place for a 10 min appointment. That really takes it out of me, both mentally and physically."

"My mental health and staff not listening to this or not wanting to know."



PEER-LED SOLUTIONS



THE ISSUE:

Many find travelling to their appointments challenging due to mental health, physical health and/or financial issues.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

When possible, offer more remote appointments and check-ins; and support people who are struggling financially with their travel costs.

"I would have liked phone call appointments as well, because of my anxiety. I found this quite difficult."

"It's understanding that people's health has an impact if you can get out and about, when it's bad you can't always get to an office and face seeing someone. This needs to be considered."



THE ISSUE:

Some people feel like their individual vulnerabilities, needs, and circumstances are not being considered enough by their practitioners.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

How their vulnerabilities impact people on probation need to be considered when organising appointments and deciding on the conditions of their sentence.

"Stop having a blanket approach and start seeing people as individual, look after and care for people in different ways."

"They need to take time out to meet people and have a conversation, not just tick them on the register. Maybe even offer them a drink when they come in."



THE ISSUE:

Many people, especially those with neurodiverse conditions, feel the way probation communicates with them is not always clear or consistent enough which can be overwhelming and increase anxiety.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Communicate clearly and consistently what is expected of people, consider sending appointment reminders to those who ask for them. Avoid cancelling appointments or changing appointment dates and times.

"Send weekly or fortnightly text message reminders of appointment days and times. Take into account peoples health, memory issues and help people as a service, link with others and keep us updated. More structure of focus to the appointments as they offer nothing."



THE ISSUE:

Some people on probation do not feel safe going to the probation offices.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Ask each person on probation whether they feel safe coming to probation. If they do not, find out how they could feel safer. For example: organise different times they can come in when there are no people around, meet them at the door and take them straight into the office, or offer remote appointments.

"Well, I suppose it's organising people, like I said zoom calls could work and even not having people waiting too long when they are in the building, so they are not mixing."



THE ISSUE:

Some people have been left homeless after coming out of prison.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

No person on probation who is classed as a vulnerable adult at risk of harm should end up homeless after coming out of prison.

More housing support for people with life sentences after coming out of prison.

"Well, pull their finger out and start housing people. People coming out of prison who are classed as vulnerable, why are they just let out to walk the streets? They don't take any responsibility for that."

"Probation has helped me a lot, my concern is that there is no help or support from the government for lifers coming out of prison regarding housing. I'm a lifer came out of prison after nearly 25 years living with mum on release then mum passed away. Homeless living in my car for past 6 months no support from housing council. The number of times I have wanted to end my life only I know, and probation helped me a lot by daily calls. I am at a point either I end my suffering or ask to go back to prison."



THE ISSUE:

Some people felt probation and different service providers do not fully understand their needs due to not having staff with lived experience and from different backgrounds; and some think there should be more peer support available.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Hire more people with lived experience and from different class backgrounds; and organise more peer support groups for different people on probation, e.g. people on IPP and life sentences.

"Hire people from different backgrounds who have lived a life, taken a drug or whatever and they will be more respected and listened too for making a change after really struggling."

"Many people on licence, especially lifers, IPPs and long termers could support each other in group type contact where people just released could hear about the difficulties of fitting back into society after long term imprisonment."



THE ISSUE:

Some people on probation said since there was no continuity of care after their probation finished, they were left without any support and have been struggling since.

SUGGESTED PEER-LED SOLUTION:

Ensure there is an appropriate care plan in place when vulnerable adults at risk of harm finish their time on probation.

"Well, the check-ins were helping me to progress these should have continued I feel for longer."

"The support I got was so helpful as my life was a mess, but then it was ripped away from me before my probation ended before I had prepared myself to have it taken. And since then, any progress I had made has all gone. In many ways I'm worse than ever and wish I still had the support."

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AT RISK OF HARM ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES – SERVICE USER VOICE

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